



**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF TESOL ASSOCIATIONS**

**Submission on the**

**Productivity Commission**

**Review of the National School Reform Agreement:**

**Interim Report**

**October 2022**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ACTA's response to the Productivity Commission's *Interim Report on the Review of the National School Reform Agreement* centres on challenging the silence about EAL/D learners in the current Agreement and their non-recognition as a priority equity cohort within national policy. This exclusion means that current national reform policy and initiatives do not reflect or address the needs of over 600,000 English language learners in Australian schools.

ACTA argues for the inclusion of the EAL/D learner cohort in the next Agreement on grounds of educational access and equity (engagement and achievement of First Nations, migrant and refugee English language learners in the English-medium curriculum) and national interest (continuing growth of the EAL/D learner population through immigration), so that these students can benefit from future reform initiatives.

Failure to rectify this exclusion will perpetuate systemic educational barriers and create educational disadvantage where it need not exist. It will continue to subvert other National Policy Initiatives and undermine desired student outcomes of achievement, engagement and gaining skills for further study, employment and life success (p.43).

In responding to the Report's findings and information requests, ACTA has identified two inter-related problems. The first is the Commission's apparent assumption that speaking a language other than English is a source of disadvantage which causes EAL/D learners to 'fall behind' and require individualised treatment. The second is the failure to explicitly address language in learning issues and conflate explicit language pedagogy with cultural sensitivity. Underlying both problems is a failure to see that the disadvantages suffered by EAL/D learners stem primarily from monolingual tunnel vision about the learning process and learning goals.

We propose an alternative perspective that locates EAL/D learners within diverse language ecologies. This perspective requires us to view speakers of languages other than English as coming to school with a source of strength. The onus is on the school to nurture these linguistic assets and also use them as a stepping-stone in extending the learners' linguistic repertoire to gain Standard Australian English and access formal education. Extending the learner's linguistic repertoire requires programs, pedagogies and teachers with expertise in language teaching. It requires provision that responds to the diverse urban, rural and remote locations, backgrounds and learning needs of First Nations, refugee and migrant English language learners.

Designating EAL/D learners as a priority equity cohort in the next NSRA would set in motion the following responses:

- tailored, targeted, evidence-based EAL/D pedagogies that promote learners' access to the English-medium curriculum (section 3).
- recognition that EAL/D learners' wellbeing is supported and fostered by the languages which mediate their learning, relationships and identities (section 4)
- partnerships with agencies equipped to address the difficulties and challenges faced by young people from First Nations, refugee and migrant backgrounds (section 4)
- the development of skills in teaching EAL/D learners guided and promoted through EAL/D Elaborations of AITSL's Australian Professional Teaching Standards (section 5)

- course content that equips all teacher candidates to engage productively with Australia's increasingly multilingual classrooms (section 5)
- EAL/D expertise and leadership used to upskill teachers and schools in whole-school, across-the-curriculum approaches that embrace EAL/D learners and their communities (sections 5 and 6)
- partnerships between schools and higher education that promote best practice in teaching, supervision, mentoring and professional development to meet EAL/D learners' educational needs (section 5)
- a national model of teacher supply and demand that allows monitoring and planning to improve EAL/D expertise in the teacher workforce (section 5)
- designated EAL/D leadership positions that encourage teachers to develop high levels of EAL/D expertise (section 6)
- school principals and leaders equipped through a National EAL/D Professional Development Strategy to make knowledgeable decisions about the best use of their school's human and material resources in responding to EAL/D learners and their communities (section 6)
- a national picture of EAL/D learners' English proficiency levels and learning gains assessed with reference to the ACARA EAL/D Learning Progression (section 7)
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## Introduction

The Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Productivity Commission's Interim Report on the National School Reform Agreement (henceforth the Report). This response follows our initial submission, which focused on remedying the unwarranted exclusion of English language learners from national education policy and Australia's school reform agenda.<sup>1</sup>

ACTA is the peak professional body for TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) educators in pre-school, school and adult settings. It comprises representatives from state and territory TESOL associations, whose members include teachers, consultants and curriculum developers and researchers in the field of English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D). Our mission is to advocate for the educational interests of students who are learning English as their second or additional language in all sectors (Early Childhood Education, schools, adult, community and tertiary education) and for those who teach them in specialist and mainstream classrooms.

ACTA welcomes the Report's reference to learners of English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) as one example of students not currently designated as a priority equity cohort. Their current exclusion significantly undermines the NSRA's effectiveness. Their inclusion would be advantageous for these learners, those teaching them and for policy-making at all levels from schools to jurisdictions to States/Territories and the Commonwealth.

ACTA commends the Report's acknowledgement of the diversity of students' educational needs and aspirations. EAL/D learners are clearly distinctive as a student cohort but the group itself is also extremely diverse, as we describe in section 1 below.

Recognising EAL/D learners as a distinctive national equity cohort requires explicit consideration in regard to almost every aspect of the NSRA. The Report is weak and inconsistent in this regard. This second ACTA submission details the implications of both excluding and including this priority equity cohort in the new NSRA, together with supporting evidence.

As a starting point, we note the relative paucity of data on EAL/D learners vis-a-vis other existing and potential national equity cohorts, and the Report's reliance on ACTA's submission for this data. This situation is *prima facie* evidence of the policy vacuum that has emerged in this area over the last two decades.

The Report's description of the "remoteness of policy discussion from the lived experience of teachers and school leaders" speaks directly to ACTA's perspectives (p.74). Although teachers and learners are oblivious to the NSRA, its consequences for them are profound. We note that, in the list of submissions in Appendix A of the Interim Report, ACTA is the only professional association that advocates on behalf of teachers with a specific pedagogical focus. This would seem *prima facie* evidence for the remoteness of the policy-making from grass roots concerns in school education. We suggest that the Commission's final report would benefit from more direct insights into teachers' lived experiences of the implications of the NSRA. Regarding the significant consequences of currently excluding EAL/D learners as a priority cohort in the NSRA, ACTA would welcome the

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<sup>1</sup> [Submission 37 - Australian Council of TESOL Associations \(ACTA\) - National School Reform Agreement - Commissioned study \(pc.gov.au\)](#)

opportunity to host an on-line forum for those working on the Commission's final report with practising EAL/D teachers.

Submission 52 to this Inquiry from the Indigenous Education Consultative Meeting (IECM) expresses a concern that ACTA endorses as absolutely fundamental:

*We wholeheartedly reject language of 'disadvantage' in reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. This labelling of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and families as disadvantaged continues to play into a culture of deficit discourse and low expectations that stymie Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' ability to thrive in their education. Our students are not the problem – the system is failing them.*

*While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and communities face a range of complex and compounding circumstances that impact their educational engagement and outcomes, they are not inherently disadvantaged by being Indigenous. We commend the strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students knowing their culture, language and identity. The power of being able to walk strong in two worlds.*

This statement applies with particular force to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. However, it is true for all the learners of English as an additional language or dialect on whose behalf ACTA seeks to advocate. Submission 52 continues by asking for recognition of:

*the benefit of students who speak Language coming to school with multilingual skills and that these need to be built on as a strength rather than seen as a deficit.<sup>2</sup>*

Along these lines, the Report is disappointing in two related respects.

First, it consistently reflects a 'deficit' perspective to EAL/D learners, starting with their framing within a student cohort that is 'falling behind' (pp. 81-82). When EAL/D learners fall behind, it is *not* because they come to English with another language or dialect. Evidence for the cognitive advantages of bi/multilingualism and working with more than one language is well established.<sup>3</sup> However, realising these advantages requires teachers, schools and jurisdictions to place value on the learner's linguistic repertoire, build on this repertoire, and respond appropriately to what is required to learn an additional language. If teachers, schools and jurisdictions responded appropriately, EAL/D learners would thrive as bi/multilinguals and bi/multidialectal language users.

Second, the Report appears to conflate respect for students' culture with explicit and substantive attention to language(s) and language(s) learning (see section 3.2 below). ACTA argued in detail in two submissions to the Productivity Commission's 2020 Inquiry into an Indigenous Evaluation

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<sup>2</sup> [Submission 52 - Indigenous Education Consultative Meeting \(IECM\) - National School Reform Agreement - Commissioned study \(pc.gov.au\)](#) p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Examples from a huge literature on this subject are:

Adesope O. O.; Lavin T.; Thompson, T.; Ungerleider C. (2010). "A systematic review and meta-analysis of the cognitive correlates of bilingualism". *Review of Educational Research*. 80 (2): 207–245

Bialystok E. (1988). "Levels of bilingualism and levels of linguistic awareness". *Developmental Psychology*. 24 (4): 560–567

Hakuta, Kenji; Bialystok, Ellen (1994). *In other words: the science and psychology of second-language acquisition*. New York: BasicBooks. ISBN 0-465-07565-7

Ianco-Worrall A. D. (1972). "Bilingualism and cognitive development". *Child Development*. 43 (4): 1390–1400.



Strategy that this conflation is problematic. It promotes tokenism, and obscures and deflects policies and practices from substantive responses to linguistic diversity in Australia.<sup>4</sup> We find that this assumption permeates the Interim Report.

The remainder of this submission is organised as follows.

First, we directly address Information Request 3.2 (“Are there student cohorts not identified as a priority equity cohort in the current NSRA ... that should be a priority in the next agreement?”) by explaining why EAL/D learners should be so identified.

We then follow the structure of the Interim Report chapters 2-7, considering relevant Report findings and requests for information.

Each section includes ACTA’s recommendations, which are also listed in Appendix B.

## **1. *Information Request 3.2 (p. 91): Why EAL/D learners should be recognised as a national priority equity cohort***

The Report acknowledges that ‘students who speak English as an additional language or dialect often require specific support to strengthen English language skills to access the general curriculum’, that these students ‘face significant educational barriers’ and that they ‘could reasonably be made a priority in the next agreement’ (p.90).

In support of our submission that EAL/D learners be recognised as a priority equity cohort, we describe the scale, growth and distribution of English language learning needs of:

1. First Nations EAL/D learners
2. EAL/D learners from migrant and refugee backgrounds
3. International students.

### **1.1 The structural-linguistic disadvantage EAL/D learners encounter in accessing the English-medium curriculum**

The English language, as both the medium and mediator of school learning in Australia, is a key resource in all students’ learning. Students who are learning standard Australian English as an additional language or dialect enter schooling with a range of linguistic, cultural and cognitive skills, knowledge, abilities and resources. Developing proficiency in the increasingly specialised academic English, literacy and disciplinary registers of the Australian curriculum is essential for students’ school completion, further learning opportunities, employment prospects, civic participation and expanded personal wellbeing. Effective language and literacy provision is a key part of governments’ investment in high equity, high quality schooling that gives all children opportunities to achieve their educational potential. The failure to make this investment imposes long-term costs on society through impaired social cohesion and mobility, reduced productivity and increased welfare support.

For students learning English as an additional language or dialect, educational disadvantage arises when schools fail to support them to gain the English they need to participate in the life of the school

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<sup>4</sup> [Submission 87 - Australian Council of TESOL Associations \(ACTA\) - Indigenous Evaluation Strategy - Project \(pc.gov.au\)](#)

[Submission DR179 - Australian Council of TESOL Associations \(ACTA\) - Indigenous Evaluation Strategy - Project \(pc.gov.au\)](#)

and to access and succeed in the curriculum. This failure can include inappropriate, ineffective and misguided instructional responses to these students' learning needs. English language proficiency develops most effectively if students' bi/multilingual skills are recognised and used as foundation for adding English to their existing linguistic repertoire (see sections 1.2, 1.3, 3.3 and 4 below).

Successive large-scale studies have identified the distinctive learning trajectories and outcomes of language minority students in educational contexts. In all but exceptional cases, EAL/D learners need first to acquire **basic interactive conversational fluency in English** (known as "Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills" / BICS) as the foundation from which further spoken English and literacy in English develops. In schools where English is the medium of instruction and daily interaction, this typically takes about two years. However, educational success for EAL/D learners requires development of far more than basic functional English. Achieving the level of academic performance required of their English-speaking peers entails the development of **academic English oral language and literacy** (known as "Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency" / CALP).<sup>5</sup> Depending on the level of schooling, EAL/D learners can take approximately five to seven years to reach parity with the levels expected of their English-speaking peers.<sup>6</sup> For refugee students with disrupted education, little or no literacy in their first language, and the experience of trauma, it may take seven to twelve years.<sup>7</sup>

Progress along this learning trajectory is by no means automatic. It is crucially facilitated by explicit and systematic pedagogic attention to developing the oral and written English of the curriculum.<sup>8</sup>

A major educational risk for EAL/D learners in the course of their schooling therefore is the failure to progress from BICS to CALP due to inadequate instruction. This failure is manifested in student English language plateauing, literacy ceilings and academic underachievement. An undesirable consequence is that EAL/D students with native-like conversational English but poor English literacy skills may be treated as having some kind of physical, emotional or learning disability rather than as learners of English as an additional language or dialect who would be assisted by knowledgeable support in developing their English.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Cummins, J. (1991). Interdependence of first and second language proficiency in bilingual children, in E. Bialystok, *Language processing in bilingual children*, Cambridge: CUP.

Thomas, W. P., & Collier, V. P. (2002). A national study of school effectiveness for language minority students' long-term academic achievement.

Schleppegrell, M. J. & O'Hallaron, C. L. (2011). Teaching academic language in L2 secondary settings. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 31, pp. 3-18.

<sup>6</sup> Cummins, J. (2008). BICS and CALP: Empirical and theoretical status of the distinction. In *Encyclopedia of language and education* (pp. 487-499). Springer US.

<sup>7</sup> Collier, V. (1989). How Long? A synthesis of research on academic achievement in a second language, *TESOL Quarterly*, 23(3), 509-531.

Hakuta, K. (2000). How long does it take English learners to attain proficiency? *University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute*.

Demie, F. (2013). English as an additional language pupils: how long does it take to acquire English fluency? *Language and Education*, 27(1), 59-69.

<sup>8</sup> For insights into the distinctive learning and teaching entailed, see the Australian Curriculum *Annotated EAL/D Curriculum Notations* for English, Maths, Science and History: [Meeting the needs of students for whom English is an additional language or dialect | The Australian Curriculum \(Version 8.4\)](#). Many educational experts have observed that teachers' attention to these annotations would benefit all students in Australia's diverse classrooms: see section 5 below.

<sup>9</sup> Lo Bianco, J. (1998). ESL ... Is it migrant literacy? ... Is it history? *Australian Language Matters*, 6(2), 1 and 6-7.

Cummins, J (1984a) Wanted: a theoretical framework for relating language proficiency to academic achievement among bilingual students. In C. Rivera (ed) *Language proficiency and academic achievement*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

The *Final Report for the Review of the Funding for Schooling* (Gonski report) recommended meeting the needs of students with limited English language proficiency with a special loading above a general schooling resource standard.<sup>10</sup> Other special loadings accrue to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students in remote areas, students in small schools and students with disabilities. As the Report notes, students may well fit into more than one category. It is difficult if not impossible to ascertain – at least in the public domain – what proportion of Indigenous, remote and disabled students and those in small schools are also EAL/D learners.

The potential for EAL/D learners to experience educational disadvantage can be partly ascertained by assessments of their English language proficiency. However, the disadvantage accrues when access to the English-medium curriculum – and schooling more broadly – is not supported or is undermined by inappropriate systemic practices such as mis-assessment and misrecognition of student need, and inadequate resources and instruction. These institutional barriers hinder EAL/D learners' educational participation and achievement. They need to be addressed systemically and explicitly in the next National School Reform Agreement.

COVID-19 disruptions to schooling have exacerbated the disadvantages experienced by EAL/D learners, particularly those in certain Indigenous communities and in the high-migrant density areas of Sydney and Melbourne. Lockdowns have restricted the immersion contexts these students need to develop spoken English fluency in everyday face-to-face interaction with peers and teachers.<sup>11</sup> Dedicated EAL teachers have been re-allocated to mainstream classes to meet the teacher shortage. UK research on the impact of COVID-19 on EAL/D learners has revealed significant disruption to their school learning, and regression in English language skills and acquisition.<sup>12</sup> The long-term impacts on EAL/D students learning and implications for targeted post pandemic recovery programs have not been researched.

## 1.2 First Nations EAL/D learners: scale, distribution and numbers

The 2021 census records that 9.5 per cent (77,000) of those identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders use an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language at home.<sup>13</sup> The majority of these speakers live in remote areas. In 2016, the Productivity Commission reported that 61.5 per cent of

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<sup>10</sup> Gonski Report, (2011) at: <https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/review-of-funding-for-schooling-final-report-dec-2011.pdf>. The relative educational disadvantage for refugee students was estimated as having a negative impact on performance of -0.463 (or 3 quarters of a performance band on NAPLAN), comparable with the educational disadvantage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and -1.807 (or 3 performance bands on NAPLAN) for a newly arrived refugee student. Nous Group (2011) *Schooling Challenges and Opportunities: A Report for the Review of Funding for Schooling Panel*. p. 73.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.ednc.org/how-is-covid-19-affecting-esl-students/>;  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/29/nyregion/coronavirus-english-language-students.html>

<sup>12</sup> [Language and learning loss: The evidence on children who use EAL \(bell-foundation.org.uk\)](https://www.bellfoundation.org.uk/). This research found that 54 per cent of teachers who taught English language learners reported that these students had experienced language loss in writing skills, 50 per cent loss in speaking skills, 41 per cent loss in reading skills, and 36 per cent in listening skills. See also Demie, F., Hau, A., Bellsham-Revell, A., & Gay, A. (2022) *The Impact of School Closures on Pupils with English as an Additional Language*. Schools' Research and Statistics Service Education and Learning, London Borough of Lambeth.

<sup>13</sup> The most common language groups were: Other Australian Indigenous Languages (31.3%), Arnhem Land and Daly River Region languages (14.5%), Torres Strait Island languages (12.0%), Western Desert Languages (10.9%). Other languages used were: Yolngu Matha (8.5%), Arandic (7.4%), Cape York Peninsula Languages (7.0%), Northern Desert Fringe Area Languages (6.6%), Kimberley Area Languages (1.8%). [Australia: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population summary | Australian Bureau of Statistics \(abs.gov.au\)](https://abs.gov.au/)

Indigenous people living in very remote areas spoke an Indigenous language at home.<sup>14</sup> The Commission's 2020 report on Indigenous Disadvantage, using 2016 Census data, states that:

*Very remote areas had the highest proportion of Indigenous language speakers (63 per cent), followed by remote areas (21 per cent), while less than 2 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in major cities or regional areas spoke an Indigenous language at home .... The majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who spoke an Indigenous language at home also spoke English well or very well (85 per cent). However, 11 per cent of Indigenous language speakers said they did not speak English well or at all — ranging from about 3-4 per cent in major cities and inner regional areas, to 13 per cent in very remote areas.*<sup>15</sup>

ACTA notes the findings of 2020 National Indigenous Languages Report:<sup>16</sup>

- 1. Language is a fundamental part of Indigenous culture and identity, even for those who do not speak an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language.*
- 2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a range of different relationships to language—from those who speak an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language as their first language to those who are learning a language as part of revival efforts.*
- 3. All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, traditional and new, provide significant social and economic benefits to their speakers, including income-generating and employment opportunities.*
- 4. Speaking language has demonstrated benefits for individual well-being and health, particularly mental health. Speaking language is also beneficial in learning contexts.*

This report identifies three main language types used and learned by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia:

**Traditional languages:** *These are Australian languages spoken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people prior to colonisation, and the directly descended language varieties spoken today. Some are strong languages still spoken by children; others are being learned or renewed.*

**New languages:** *These Australian languages have formed since 1788 from language contact between speakers of traditional languages with speakers of English and/ or other languages. New languages have historical influences from their source languages, including English, but they are not automatically understood by Standard Australian English speakers.*

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<sup>14</sup> [Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2016 - Report \(pc.gov.au\)](#) p. A.24

<sup>15</sup> [Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2020 - Report \(pc.gov.au\)](#). p. A 5.

<sup>16</sup> The National Indigenous Languages Report (2020). Commonwealth of Australia, p. 9. [National Indigenous Languages Report | Office for the Arts, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts](#)

*Englishes: Across Australia there are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of speaking English which differ somewhat from Standard Australian English, but which Standard Australian English speakers can more or less understand. These are varieties of English just as American English is a variety of English.*

Data on the use of new languages and non-standard varieties is difficult to obtain. The starting point for thinking about the use and learning of these languages and their relationship to English is the notion of **language ecology**.<sup>17</sup>

*... in most places there is an arrangement of languages that is typical and expected for that area (the local language ecology) and it is derived from the different languages that people usually speak (individual language repertoires) in different contexts (for socio-cultural purposes, such as attending school, talking with family, visiting a doctor, or for cultural purposes). An individual's ability to interact with others or to access and benefit from services depends on their language matching the language in each interaction. While this may seem self-evident, the fact that it is not reflected in current approaches to policy and program design, and service delivery, indicates that it is not widely understood or appreciated.*

ACTA commends the notion of language ecology to the Commission as a way of thinking more productively about the place of learning and teaching Standard Australian English in Australian schools. We elaborate on it further in section 4 as a productive way of thinking about First Nations' students' wellbeing.

A language ecology framework goes beyond rhetorical statements that Indigeneity should not be equated with educational disadvantage and tokenistic connotations of language and culture (p. 98). It places Indigenous languages in relation to each other and English. From this perspective, educational policies and provision can be developed that are explicitly directed to fostering and extending students' linguistic repertoires.

Mainstream policy statements are increasingly recognising the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. Supported by at least 19 other submissions and reports, the 2020 *Parliamentary Inquiry into Education in Remote and Complex Environments* stated that:

*There is increasing recognition that being strong in language and culture are protective factors for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's health and wellbeing, and support mainstream educational attainment.*<sup>18</sup>

The 2019 Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration by Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments noted:

*All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young peoples must be empowered to achieve their full learning potential, shape their own futures, and embrace their cultures, languages and identities as Australia's First Nations peoples.*<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> D. Angelo, C. O'Shannessy, J. Simpson, I. Kral, H. Smith, and E. Browne, (2019). Well-being and Indigenous language ecologies (WILE): A strengths-based approach, The ANU: Canberra. DOI 10.25911/5dd50865580ea.

<sup>18</sup> [Remote education full report.pdf](#), p. 84

<sup>19</sup> COAG Education Council, Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration, December 2019, p. 16. For the recently released NSW Aboriginal Languages syllabus, see:



Strangely, this recognition is siloed from consideration of the relationship between support for Indigenous languages and learning English. An exception is the 2020 Parliamentary Inquiry, just cited, which explains (based on evidence from a variety of sources):

*Standard Australian English is the dominant language in Australia and there is broad agreement that all Australian children should be proficient in the English language. However, existing language skills, for example in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language, can complement and enhance a student's ability to become proficient in English. **The importance of supporting students' development in English through recognising students' existing language skills has been highlighted as being essential to literacy and numeracy development.***  
[our emphasis]

As we have already pointed out, it is the failure of the education system to meet English language learners' learning needs that *creates* the disadvantage these learners experience.

As described by the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC):

*language can act as a significant barrier to accessing and engaging in early education in remote communities... The year one school curriculum presumes a level of English that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in remote communities do not have. ... Children are beginning their school journey from a position of disadvantage.<sup>20</sup>*

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are currently designated as a priority equity cohort. Successive *Close the Gap* reports highlight Australia's continued failure to meet two key educational targets for these students: school attendance, and literacy and numeracy.<sup>21</sup> The gap for both targets is greatest in remote areas and is widening in the Northern Territory, which has the largest number and proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population who live in rural and remote areas.<sup>22</sup> This coincides with communities speaking Indigenous languages. The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) submission to the 2020 *Parliamentary Inquiry into Education in Remote and Complex Environments* stated:

*a significant proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in remote schools are English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) learners: In 2014-15, around one-third (34 per cent) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 4-14 years spoke an Australian Indigenous language (including those who only spoke some words). This increases to two-thirds (66 per cent) in remote, compared with 26 per cent in non-remote areas.<sup>23</sup>*

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<https://www.educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/about/news/official-notices/official-notices-detail/new-aboriginal-languages-k-10-syllabus>

<sup>20</sup> [Remote education\\_full report.pdf](#), para. 4.94, p. 86

<sup>21</sup> It should be noted that in relation to Indigenous students, the current ten-year National Closing the Gap Agreement, while emphasising greater partnership with Indigenous Peak Bodies, has dropped all outcome targets relating to student engagement and achievement in the school years. This omission represents a substantial weakening of national commitment to improving Indigenous students' learning in school. See Fahey, G., (2021) *Mind the Gap: Understanding the Indigenous education gap and how to close it*. Centre for Independent Studies, at: [rr41.pdf \(cis.org.au\)](#); [Closing the Gap | Closing The Gap \(niaa.gov.au\)](#)

<sup>22</sup> <https://closingthegap.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/ctg-report-2018.pdf?a=1>

<sup>23</sup> [Remote education\\_full report.pdf](#), p. 82

It seems logical that school engagement and attendance would suffer when children whose everyday language is an Aboriginal language sit classrooms that fail to acknowledge, value and support this language and to use it as a stepping-stone to school knowledge, learning literacy and English. However, as far as we know measures of school attendance or of literacy and numeracy are not disaggregated for those who are English language learners.<sup>24</sup> This disaggregation would seem necessary if the causes of poor school attendance and achievement are to be addressed.

Data on the populations of migrant and refugee students relatively clear. However, as with First Nations students, this data is anything but transparent when it comes to ascertaining English language learning needs. In turn, this lack of transparency helps frustrate advocacy for EAL/D provision.

### **1.3 EAL/D learners from migrant and refugee backgrounds: scale, growth and distribution**

Net overseas migration to Australia rose from 232,800 in 2006/7 to 262,490 in 2016/17, an increase of 12.7 per cent<sup>25</sup>, while the overseas born population grew from 4,063,954 in 2001 to 6,150, 051 in 2016, an increase of 151 per cent.<sup>26</sup>

These high immigration levels over the decade prior to the pandemic have resulted in a substantial increase in students from migrant and refugee backgrounds in schools. ACTA has estimated that currently over 600,000 speakers of languages other than English need English language support in schools throughout Australia.<sup>27</sup> ABS Census data indicate the number of school-aged respondents (0-19 years of age) who reported speaking ‘not well’ or ‘not at all’ increased from 117,158 in 2006 to 190,462 in 2016, an increase of 62 per cent.<sup>28</sup>

This trend is evident in the two government education systems with the largest number of EAL/D students. The NSW Department of Education reported a 114 per cent increase in the number of EAL/D students (from 91,706 to 196,669) between 2009 and 2019,<sup>29</sup> while the Victorian Department of Education and Training reported 69 per cent growth in EAL/D students (from 47,625 to 80,516) over the same period.<sup>30</sup>

Table 1 below documents this trend. The high overall immigration intakes of around 200,000 between 2012 and 2016, comprising family, skills and humanitarian streams, led to sustained increases of EAL students in NSW (approximately 170,000) and Victoria (approximately 55,000) respectively. These increases continued to 2020 despite the significant decline in overall immigration and the COVID nadir in 2020. This undiminished EAL student growth can be attributed to the number of years it takes for EAL learners to develop academic English and their ongoing need for EAL assistance. The anticipated resumption of a 195,000 intake means that the numbers of newly arrived and continuing

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<sup>24</sup> Our earlier submission to the Productivity Commission on the NSRA explains in detail the reasons why the LBOTE identification used to disaggregate NAPLAN results is unsatisfactory and misleading, pp. 9-10.

<sup>25</sup> [https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/prspub/6377182/upload\\_binary/6377182.pdf](https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/prspub/6377182/upload_binary/6377182.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> [https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/prspub/6377182/upload\\_binary/6377182.pdf](https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/prspub/6377182/upload_binary/6377182.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> <https://tesol.org.au/how-many-english-as-an-additional-language-or-dialect-eal-d-learners-are-there-in-australian-schools/>

<sup>28</sup> ABS Censuses 2006, 2016

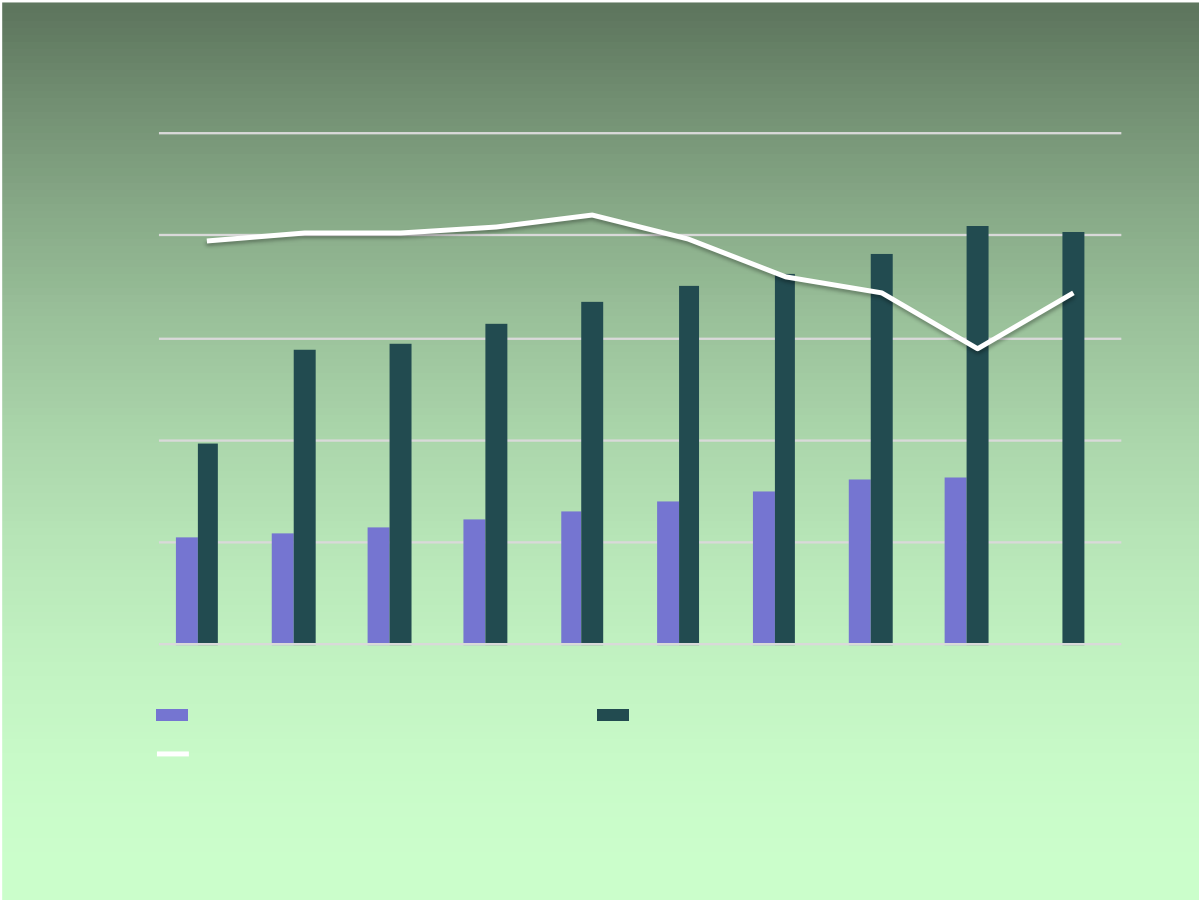
<sup>29</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training 2009 Annual Report at: [document.pdf \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/education-and-training/annual-reports);

NSW Department of Education and Training data bulletin [Schools: English as an additional language or dialect \(EAL/D\) learners 2015 to 2019 \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/education-and-training/annual-reports)

<sup>30</sup> Victorian Department of Education 2009 EAL Annual Report at: [eslreport09.pdf \(education.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/annual-reports);  
Victorian Department of Education 2019 EAL Annual Report at: [2019-eal-report.pdf \(education.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/annual-reports)

EAL/D learners will continue to grow beyond the current 200,000 (NSW) and 75,000 (Victoria) over the life of the next NSRA.

**Table 1: Migration and EAL student enrolments NSW and Victorian Government Schools 2012-2021**



The distribution and concentration of EAL/D learners in Australian schools coincides with systemic educational inequity. Many metropolitan schools in areas of high migrant density in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth have large numbers of EAL/D learners as a proportion of the total school population. In many of these ‘disadvantaged’ schools, EAL/D learners make up the *majority* of student enrolments but are effectively taught as if they were native English speakers.

Analysis of school level EAL/D learner population data is needed to provide a real picture of the linguistic diversity and character of Australian schools. An appropriate metric here would be the number of primary and secondary schools where EAL/D learners comprise decile bands each between 30 to 90 per cent of total student enrolments. The data on which this analysis could be based is collected by NSW and Victorian Government education systems but not made publicly available. As part of its investigation of structural issues affecting EAL/D teaching and learning in Australia, the NSRA review team should request and analyse this data.

The growth and concentration of EAL/D learners reflect Australia’s long standing immigration program and its growing culturally and linguistically diverse population. These trends and the anticipated post-pandemic resumption of, and increase in family, skills and humanitarian streams of Australia’s immigration program mean that newly arrived and mainstream EAL/D learners will continue to make up a significant proportion of the Australian school student population in the immediate and longer



term. In the coming decade, immigration will be a major driver of Australia's population growth<sup>31</sup> while international crises will continue to put pressure on Australia's refugee and humanitarian intakes.<sup>32</sup>

Currently there is a complete disconnect between Commonwealth immigration and school education policy. Devolution of responsibility for EAL/D provision (including support to new arrivals students) to State and Territory governments has severed all links between Australia's immigration and its education programs, and dissipated essential forward planning for migrant intakes. Providing effective English language tuition for these learners is an essential educational access and equity requirement consequent on Australia's immigration program. It is in the national interest that new NSRA reconnects Australia's EAL/D provision with its immigration policies.

#### **1.4 International students with English language learning needs: scale, growth and distribution**

By 2018, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, enrolments of international fee-paying students in Government, Catholic and Independent schools in Australia had grown to a total of 243,887. Of this, 128,998 were primary enrolments and 114,889 were secondary. Government school enrolments were 182,956 students or 75 per cent of the total.<sup>33</sup> As Australia's borders reopen and state and territory systems and government and independent schools resume their international student programs, it is likely that international student enrolments will return to levels similar to before the pandemic.

As a condition of school enrolment, international students must meet minimum English language proficiency requirements. However, it is not uncommon for some students to be found on arrival to have insufficient English for learning in Australian schools, particularly the senior school curriculum. They therefore enrol in school with English language proficiency needs and require EAL/D support.<sup>34</sup>

Most international students enrol in primary and secondary schools where EAL/D tuition is already offered to domestic students. International students often access education systems' existing intensive English provision on a fee for service basis.

The *Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2002* and related legislation aim to protect and enhance Australia's reputation for quality education Australia by providing rigorous protection, including tuition protection, for international students. Standard 6 of the current *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students* code (Student Support Services) requires schools to provide, at no additional cost, English and academic support services to overseas students as needed to enable them to achieve expected learning outcomes.<sup>35</sup>

EAL/D tuition entitlements for international fee-paying students do not extend to domestic EAL/D learners. Given that schools are not obliged to use their English proficiency loading to support migrant and refugee background EAL/D learners, these entitlements create the potential for international

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<sup>31</sup> Cully, M. & Pejoski, L. (2012) Australia unbound? Migration, openness and population futures. In *A Greater Australia: Population, policies and governance* Committee for Economic Development. p.70.

<sup>32</sup> For example, Commonwealth Government's recent decision to accept an additional intake of Syrian refugee families and to increase the number of humanitarian places from 13,500 to 20,000.

<sup>33</sup> Answer to Senate Estimates Question on Notice SQ19-130.

<sup>34</sup> Pre-enrolment English language assessments are often unreliable as they are typically conducted offshore in association with agents who have a vested interest in the application's success. Anecdotal reports by EAL/D teachers suggest some of these students suffer stress and inability to cope with the English language demands of the senior curriculum.

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.education.gov.au/esos-framework/resources/standard-6-overseas-student-support-services>

students to be given priority access to EAL/D provision in preference to domestic, permanent resident EAL/D learners.<sup>36</sup> There is no Commonwealth requirement for schools to report on how they use the English proficiency loading or on the number of international fee-paying students in school EAL/D programs. The result is inconsistent reporting by jurisdictions, which makes comparative analysis impossible. Information is not available in the public domain on how the loading and/or international student fees are used.<sup>37</sup>

### **ACTA Recommendation 1**

***EAL/D learners from Indigenous, refugee and migrant backgrounds should be identified as a priority equity cohort warranting national collaborative action through the new NSRA.***

### **ACTA Recommendation 2**

***The Productivity Commission should request access to available State/Territory education system EALD student survey data to investigate concentrations of EAL/D learners in schools and report on key decile band proportions of EAL/D learner enrolments in primary and secondary schools.***

### **ACTA Recommendation 3**

***The Productivity Commissions should seek to confirm or revise ACTA's estimation of 600,000 EAL/D learners in Australian schools by analysing:***

- *available Commonwealth data on students attracting the English language proficiency loading funding*
- *available education system reports.*

## **2. High level assessment of National Policy Initiatives**

### **2.1 Draft Findings 1.1 and 1.2 (p. 54): Achievement outcomes**

The exclusion of EAL/D learners as priority equity cohort from the NSRA has contributed to the stagnation of students' academic achievement over the past decade. The eight NPIs (Table 1.1, p. 343) do not include or require attention to English language learning needs. The failure to address specific educational needs in the current NSRA has meant that the sources of disadvantage in school education have not been effectively tackled. Notably:

- the Gonski funding reforms have not reversed social and educational disadvantage in Australian schools – in some respects it is increasing

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<sup>36</sup> For example, anecdotal reports indicate that in some jurisdictions international students comprise the majority of enrolments in senior EAL/D English courses originally designed for domestic students with English language proficiency needs. However, it is also possible that international students are cross-subsidising English for local students, as was reported by one respondent to the 2016 ACTA survey of EAL/D teachers:

*... a small group of fee-payers generate funds we can control ourselves. Compared to earlier years we are less strapped for resources and are able to soften, slightly, the impact of a funding formula that gives us an 'average' of 13 per class, which of course means that class sizes can be much too large, especially for educationally interrupted beginners. If we were dependent on government funding alone, we would be seriously disadvantaged. And as for our physical spaces...we manage, but the classrooms are really sub-standard. Qualified EAL/D teacher teaching new arrivals in Victorian government school.*

<sup>37</sup> ACTA is aware that this reporting does occur in some jurisdictions, for example the NSW Government system: [English language proficiency \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/english-language-proficiency). However, these reports cannot be accessed in the public domain.

- school engagement and English literacy and numeracy achievement targets for Indigenous students have failed spectacularly, particularly in rural and remote areas.

These failures have contributed to the stagnation in Australia's overall student performance in literacy as measured on NAPLAN, and decline internationally as measured on literacy tests, PIRLS and PISA.

The high-level policy silence regarding EAL/D learners has meant that policy and programs have not equipped teachers to work constructively and proactively with EAL/D learners. For example, as we detail in section 5, initial teacher education course accreditation does not require programs to equip mainstream teachers to respond effectively to EAL/D learners in their classrooms. The Teacher Workforce review is not considering the recruitment and retention of specialist EAL/D teachers.

ACTA's initial submission to the NSRA Review included reference to our newly developed *National Roadmap for EAL/D Education in Schools*. The *Roadmap* detailed twelve key Actions to be implemented over a three-year time-frame and aligned to the NPIs of the current NSRA, which were shown in Appendix B in that submission.<sup>38</sup> For your convenience, we include the same table below.

*See next page*

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<sup>38</sup> [Submission 37 - Australian Council of TESOL Associations \(ACTA\) - National School Reform Agreement - Commissioned study \(pc.gov.au\)](#) p. 12

## Appendix B

### National EAL/D education Roadmap articulation with the NPI of the current NSRA

NPI Direction	NPI related project/target	EAL/D Roadmap action	EAL/D policy issue addressed
<i>A. Supporting students, student learning and student achievement</i>	The National School Resourcing Board to review SRS arrangements	ACTION 1: Restore adequate needs-based funding for migrant, refugee and Indigenous English language learners	Need to review the inadequate needs-based funding of the Gonski low English proficiency loading
	Ai Enhancing AC to support teacher assessment of student achievement and growth against clear descriptors	ACTION 2: Upgrade EAL/D teaching and learning resources in the Australian Curriculum	Need to renew national curriculum support for differentiated EAL/D learner assessment and pedagogy.
	Target c. At least halve the gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in year 12 or equivalent attainment rated by 2020, from 2006 baseline	ACTION 3: Leverage quality bi-lingual, bi-literacy education to improve Indigenous students' achievement in remote school communities	Continued failure of monolingual educational approaches and programs to improve Indigenous students schooling outcomes.
	Aiii Reviewing senior secondary pathways into work, further education and training	ACTION 4: Guarantee education, training and employment pathways for educationally vulnerable Indigenous, migrant and refugee youth	Lack of a consistent and coherent national approach to addressing school/ post school education and training pathways for migrant, refugee and Indigenous youth
<i>B. Supporting teaching, school leadership and school improvement</i>	B. ii Strengthening the initial teacher education accreditation system	ACTION 5: Equip all pre-service teachers to cater for EAL/D learners in their classrooms	Pre-service teacher not equipped to teach EAL/D learners in their classrooms
	B. ii Strengthening the initial teacher education accreditation system	ACTION 6: Revive specialist EAL/D teacher education programs	Weakened demand and provision of specialist TESOL courses for schools
	B. ii Strengthening the initial teacher education accreditation system	ACTION 7: Rebuild EAL/D professional learning, leadership and school development	Reduced opportunities for EAL/D professional development for schools, teachers and school leaders
	Bi Reviewing future teacher workforce needs to attract and retain the best and brightest to the teaching profession and attract teachers to areas of need	ACTION 8: Institute systematic, national, evidence-based teacher workforce planning that includes EAL/D specialist teachers	Inadequacy of teacher workforce planning for EAL/D specialist teachers
	C ii Establish an independent national evidence institute to inform teacher practice, system improvement and policy development	ACTION 9: Fast track post-pandemic EAL/D pedagogies of recovery	Need to identify and scale up new effective post pandemic EAL/D pedagogies
<i>C. Enhancing the national evidence base</i>	C. iii Improving national data quality, consistency and collection to improve the national evidence base and inform policy development	ACTION 10: Implement a nationally agreed measure and method of reporting English language proficiency	Need to complete the national project to develop a nationally agreed measure and method of reporting English language proficiency
	C. iii Improving national data quality, consistency and collection to improve the national evidence base and inform policy development	ACTION 11: Ensure transparency and accountability in the allocation and use of the English language proficiency loading	Lack of transparency and accountability in the allocation and use of the English language proficiency loading
	C. iii Improving national data quality, consistency and collection to improve the national evidence base and inform policy development	ACTION 12: Review reporting, accountability and implementation of international student programs in Australian schools	Lack of transparency and accountability in the reporting of international student programs in Australian schools

## 2.2 Information Request 2.1 (p. 66): Evidence-based research

In order for the recently established Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) to realise the full potential of evidence-based research to inform and be applied to classroom practice, it is essential that their research refines its findings by identifying the contexts of and contributors to student learning outcomes.

The recent AERO report *Writing development: What does a decade of NAPLAN data reveal?* documents declining results in student writing.<sup>39</sup> These findings are worthwhile and salutary. We realise that AERO is in the early stages of its work and that further investigation of these findings is possible. However, in investigating NAPLAN results, AERO was constrained by the fact that these results cannot be disaggregated for EAL/D learners, which speaks to our central recommendation that EAL/D learners be designated a national priority equity cohort.<sup>40</sup> In the absence of cautions regarding the contexts of their findings, AERO's pedagogical recommendations are "one-fits-all" and run the risk of overly simplistic interpretations. A further risk is the rush to judgement evident in some media coverage and the unproductive focus on educational crisis and teacher blame.<sup>41</sup>

ACTA hopes that, in exploring evidence to support EAL/D teaching and learning, especially in Indigenous contexts, AERO will scrutinise the extent to which monolingual English assumptions are prevalent in many current policies, resources and approaches. In remote Australian Indigenous language-speaking communities, it seems clear that misguided approaches are, at very least, not assisting in reversing the failure to achieve Closing the Gap targets and decline in NAPLAN results (see sections 3 & 7 below). AERO should consider the substantive evidence for successful learning and higher levels of school attendance that have occurred when quality bilingual/biliterate programs flourished in some communities (see section 3.3).

We understand that AERO's mandate does not include direct contact/interaction with teacher education institutions or teacher consultancy services. Consequently, AERO is constrained in finding ways for the resources it produces to be incorporated into teacher professional development. In ACTA's interactions with AERO, it has emerged that this is a significant constraint on the take-up of advice by schools and teachers (see Report Figure 2.2, p. 66).

### ACTA Recommendation 4

*AERO research findings should include identification of the contexts of student learning outcomes, and where possible and appropriate, disaggregate results to include EAL/D learners.*

### ACTA Recommendation 5

*As a matter of urgency, AERO should direct its attention to the pedagogical factors that contribute to and/or hinder Indigenous EAL/D's learners' academic achievement.*

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<sup>39</sup> <https://www.edresearch.edu.au/sites/default/files/2022-10/writing-development-report-aa.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> Creagh, Sue (2016). Understanding the politics of categories in reporting national test results. National testing in schools: an Australia assessment. Edited by Bob Lingard, Greg Thompson, and Sam Sellar. Oxon, United Kingdom: Routledge. 110-125. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315659312-9>

<sup>41</sup> These issues have become even more evident in the criticism the report has attracted from English teachers' associations, including ACTA: <https://lens.monash.edu/@education/2022/11/07/1385245/what-acros-report-of-writing-development-in-australia-doesnt-want-to-talk-about>



## **ACTA Recommendation 6**

***AERO's links with organisations responsible for delivering professional development for teachers should be strengthened.***

### **2.3 Draft recommendation 2.1 (p. 68): The formative assessment tool**

The current exclusion of EAL/D learners as a national priority equity cohort has profoundly negative consequences for these learners, as we will elaborate in section 4. Given these consequences, ACTA has no confidence that the online formative assessment tool will assist EAL/D learners.

The Australian Curriculum learning area progression descriptions in the On-line Formative Assessment tool have limited value for EAL/D learners. The progressions direct teachers to assess their students on the assumption that they are English mother-tongue speakers and therefore have established oral and listening English skills. Students' progress in learning is assumed to build from these linguistic and sociocultural foundations. The progressions ignore the fact that EAL/D learners come to Standard Australian English using a different language with its associated cultural understandings. As we have argued in section 1 above, EAL/D learners are *made* disadvantaged when teachers ignore how learners' existing linguistic knowledge and skills interact with the new linguistic system of English. Their knowledge and skills are positioned as problematic and a barrier, not as the starting point from which English should be taught and learned.

Until these assumptions are reversed, the online formative assessment tool runs the risk of stigmatising these students and misdirecting efforts to support them.

### **2.4 Information Request 2.2 (p. 76): Jurisdictional plans and reporting**

ACTA strongly supports the development, publication and implementation of jurisdiction implementation plans and comparable annual progress reporting in relation to national priority equity cohorts specifically including EAL/D learners. ACTA's *National Roadmap for EAL/D Education in Schools* provides a model for such an implementation plan.

## **ACTA Recommendation 7**

***The new NSRA should include the development, publication and implementation of jurisdiction implementation plans and comparable annual progress reporting in relation to priority equity cohorts, including EAL/D learners, and these plans should be informed by the Actions listed in the ACTA National Roadmap for EAL/D Education in Schools.***

## **3. Lifting outcomes for EAL/D learners**

The silence about EAL/D learners at the highest policy levels – crucially in the NSRA – flows through the whole education system. This silence *creates* disadvantage where it need not and should not exist. It also undermines measures seeking to redress the disadvantages experienced by currently designated national priority equity cohorts, and sometimes misdirects and even subverts them.<sup>42</sup>

ACTA's central recommendation that EAL/D learners be designated a national priority equity cohort (see section 1 above) responds to the Report's Draft Findings 3.1 (p. 82), 3.4 (p. 91) and Information Request 3.2 (p. 91). In that section, we described this cohort.

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<sup>42</sup> The use of NAPLAN targets is the most obvious example: see sections 3.3 and 7.2.

ACTA endorses the Report's statement that:

*To be successful, the NSRA will need to close the distance between national policy making and classroom practice. Each should inform the other — with teachers and school leaders influencing policy, and evidence-based approaches gaining more traction in schools and classrooms. (p. 22)*

In the following sections responding to Chapter 3 of the Report's Findings and Recommendations, our central argument is that effective classroom practice is central to lifting the educational outcomes of EAL/D students and, further, that an understanding of what constitutes that practice is missing in both the Report chapter and high level policy-making.

The silence about EAL/D learners does not result from a lack of knowledge about what should happen in classrooms. A mass of evidence exists about how EAL/D learners should be taught, as the footnotes in this submission bear witness. The problem lies in what has recently been called in another context 'a collective act of leaning into a studied ignorance'.<sup>43</sup>

Deliberate steps are needed to reverse this 'studied ignorance' and end the silence. The first step is to name EAL/D learners as a cohort of school students whose learning needs are currently not being met. That would open the way to naming these needs and considering the evidence on how they are best met.

### **3.1 Information Request 3.1 (p. 82): Targeted support**

ACTA supports 'intensive targeted support' for both EAL/D learners and, as discussed in section 5, their teachers. The *substance* of the support is the nub of the issue.

Identifying EAL/D learners in the context of 'students who have fallen behind' is *not* a good starting point, as should be clear from what we have already presented. This identification stems from conclusions based on assessments that are normed for mother tongue English speakers, as we elaborate in sections 3.2 and 3.3.

The evidence is questionable in support of the kind of intervention described in the section preceding Information Request 3.1, at least as it applies to EAL/D learners. Research may indicate improved student participation in small groups (p. 82). However, the crucial issue is whether pedagogy used in these groups targets the learner's actual learning needs, in this case, whether it is EAL/D pedagogy informed by evidence-based principles and practices.

Although not mentioned, the Report's endorsement of small group tuition seems to reflect the recent short-term COVID-19 'catch-up' programs implemented in Victoria and NSW.<sup>44</sup> These programs are

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<sup>43</sup> Rick Morton "Robo-debt: Liberals knew it was illegal before it started". The Saturday Paper Nov. 5-12, 2022, No.

424. [Robo-debt: Liberals knew it was illegal before it started | The Saturday Paper](#)

<sup>44</sup> [NSW students benefit from tutoring program; Tutor Learning Initiative: Policy | education.vic.gov.au;](#)

[Learning the lessons from the long school lockdowns - Grattan Institute;](#)

<https://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/our-work/reports/covid-intensive-learning-support-program>.

The UK programs on which Australia's are modelled have been the subject of strong criticism. See:

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/jun/02/union-criticises-pitiful-covid-catch-up-plan-england-pupils>;

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9643291/Gavin-Williamson-squirms-schools-Covid-catch-plan.html>;

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jun/02/education-recovery-chief-kevan-collins-quit-english-schools-catch-up-row>;

Gorard, S., Siddiqui, N., & See, B. H. (2017). What works and what fails? Evidence from seven popular literacy 'catch-up' schemes for the transition to secondary school in England. *Research Papers in Education*, 32(5), 626-648.

expensive (\$250m and \$337m respectively) and have exacerbated the shortage of casual teachers. There has been no cost benefit analysis, independent evaluation or disaggregation of how particular learner groups may have benefitted over the shorter or longer term.

In the EAL/D field at least, evidence supporting this approach is at best mixed and at worst unfavourable. A long history of ‘small group and one-to-one tuition’ for migrant and refugee background EAL/D learners goes back to the late 1940’s when post-War immigration began. It is commonly referred to as the ‘withdrawal’ or ‘broom cupboard’ approach. EAL/D learners from all backgrounds are generally ambitious about their learning, dislike being singled out, do not want to miss what is being taught to their classmates, and may resist being pulled out from mainstream classes.<sup>45</sup> Withdrawal classes are liable to be marginalised, residualised and stigmatised in a school, and may be allocated to teachers who cannot cope with mainstream classes.

More importantly, for EAL/D learners the problem of ‘falling behind’ is located with the student. They absolve schools from their responsibility for developing inclusive EAL/D provision.<sup>46</sup> This provision should not be a remedy for ‘falling behind’ but a normal component of the school’s and the education system’s response to diversity.

EAL/D pedagogy is not a generic ‘one size fits all’ teaching practice. From the late 1970s onwards, a growing literature has explored different modes of EAL/D provision, including small group ‘pull out’ classes but also, for example, intensive beginners’ classes, bilingual teaching (especially in remote Indigenous schools), parallel timetabled classes, in-class support, and team-teaching between mainstream and EAL specialist teachers.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> This reaction is not universal. Commenting on a draft of this submission, a teacher wrote:

*I don't see this in the primary school setting. Beginning and Emerging Phase students I have taught love being taken out of class.*

<sup>46</sup> See Davison, C. (2001). ESL in Australian schools: From the margins to the mainstream. In B. Mohan, C. Leung & C. Davison (Eds.), *English as a second language in the mainstream: Teaching, learning and identity* (pp. 11-29). Harlow, Essex, England: Pearson Education Limited. She describes the adverse effects of this approach in the 1970’s and 80’s:

*The withdrawal system tended to shift the responsibility for the migrant child from the mainstream teacher and the school itself onto the shoulders of ESL teachers who, more often than not, found themselves trying to cope with all the students’ concerns, irrespective of whether they had anything to do with language.* (p. 16)

<sup>47</sup> See for example:

Patsy M. Lightbown (2014) Making the minutes count in L2 teaching, *Language Awareness*, 23:1-2, 3-23, DOI: 10.1080/09658416.2013.863903 To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2013.863903>

This review the research literature found that ‘even when more time is available, it is important to provide learning opportunities that focus on both meaningful language use and the vocabulary and structure of the language itself ... [and that supporting students’ knowledge of their first language (L1) can contribute to their long-term academic and L2 success.’ (p. 1).

Thomas, W. & Collier, V. (1997) *School effectiveness for language minority students*. National Clearinghouse for bilingual education: George Washington University, Washington DC.

Thomas, W. & Collier V. (2002) *A National Study of School Effectiveness for Language Minority Students’ Long Term Academic Achievement*. CREDE: UC, Berkeley.

The data set for these studies from 1982-2001 of student achievement and program effectiveness consisted of some 900,000 students in US schools. ‘Success’ was defined as the target group reaching full educational parity with native English speakers in all school content subjects, not just English proficiency. Achieving parity generally required at least 5-6 years. The following factors were identified as promoting success (and were stronger than SES or gender variables):

- (i) continuing specialist support in English and their first language where possible, involving “cognitively complex academic instruction through the students’ first language for as long as possible” and “cognitively complex academic instruction through English for part of the school day”
- (ii) interactive and engaging classroom language-based teaching and learning involving communicative teaching/learning strategies and the teaching of language through content
- (iii) school executive and teachers who are knowledgeable and trained in ESL pedagogy and multicultural education and have high expectations of student achievement.



Irrespective of the mode of delivery, the key to effective EAL/D teaching is explicitly designed, systematic and staged language-informed and language-focused pedagogy. This pedagogy sets up multiple opportunities for learner comprehension of and engagement with unfamiliar language forms that express meaningful and relevant content. Learners are ‘scaffolded up’ to meet the academic language and literacy demands of the curriculum through ‘high-challenge/high-support’, receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing) communication activities across a spectrum of informal to formal spoken and written language.<sup>48</sup>

A focus on bridging the language gap between students and the curriculum can inform teaching across the curriculum.<sup>49</sup> Knowledgeable and skilled specialist EAL/D teachers do more than provide specific support for EAL/D learners. They play an important leadership role in their schools (see section 6) and have much to offer their colleagues in other teaching areas.

Effective EAL/D pedagogy is a specialised discipline-based practice that draws on knowledge and skills encompassing:

- the structure of the English language
- how languages are learned
- the social contexts of language use and language learning
- curriculum, syllabus, materials and assessment design and development
- classroom strategies and skills appropriate for English language learners.

The pedagogy required to promote EAL/D learning outcomes goes well beyond contingent adjustments or individualised tuition. EAL/D pedagogy must take its proper place along with other teaching areas in school programs, evaluations, professional development and advocacy. In section 5.1.2 below, we elaborate on what is needed if this pedagogy is to (re)gain its place in schools.

A essential first step is to designate EAL/D learners as a national priority equity cohort that requires systemic recognition, appropriately targeted provision, and expertise at both the classroom and policy-making levels.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Hammond, J. (2006). High challenge, high support: Integrating language and content instruction for diverse learners in an English literature classroom. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 5(4), 269-283.

Gibbons, P. (2009). *English learners, academic literacy, and thinking: Learning in the challenge zone* (pp. 118-130). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Athanases, S. (2012). Maintaining High Challenge and High Support for Diverse Learners. *Leadership*, 42(1), 18.

Wilson, K., & Devereux, L. (2014). Scaffolding theory: High challenge, high support in Academic Language and Learning (ALL) contexts. *Journal of Academic Language and Learning*, 8(3), A91-A100. Gibbons, P. (2003). Mediating language learning: Teacher interactions with ESL students in a content-based classroom. *TESOL Quarterly*, 37, 2, pp. 247-273.

Derewianka, B. (2014). Supporting students in the move from spoken to written language. In A. Mahbob & L. Barratt (eds.) *Englishes in multilingual contexts*. Netherlands: Springer, pp. 165-181.

Walqui, A. (2006). Scaffolding instruction for English language learners: A conceptual framework. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 9, 2, pp. 159-180.

<sup>49</sup> Gibbons, P. (2006). *Bridging discourses in the ESL classroom: Students, teachers and researchers*. A&C Black.

<sup>50</sup> ACTA is advised that some jurisdictions are taking substantive steps in this direction. For example, re the NSW Education Dept EAL/D Leaders’ Strategy, see: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/multicultural-education/english-as-an-additional-language-or-dialect/eald-education-leadership-strategy>; [https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/multicultural-education/eald/EALD\\_Education\\_Leaders\\_locations.pdf](https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/multicultural-education/eald/EALD_Education_Leaders_locations.pdf)

### **ACTA Recommendation 8**

*Before any national implementation of intensive, targeted one-on-one or small group support for students who have fallen behind is considered, an independent evaluation should be conducted of the Victorian and NSW intensive learning support programs to determine the short and long-term benefits for equity groups, opportunity costs for education systems and the overall costs and benefits.*

### **ACTA Recommendation 9**

*The next NSRA should include initiatives that directly address the specific pedagogic needs of the EAL/D learner cohort. ‘Intensive, targeted support’ for EAL/D learners should be taken to refer to system and whole school provision that caters for EAL/D learning needs through a variety of approaches that include intensive English classes, bilingual/biliteracy classes in remote Indigenous schools, parallel English classes, and collaborative teaching by EAL/D specialists with other teachers. This targeted support will require a significant upgrade in pre-service and postgraduate teacher education, and on-going professional development, for both mainstream and specialist EAL/D teachers and for school leadership.*

### **3.2 Report Draft Findings 3.2 (p. 88) and 3.3 (p. 90): Addressing specific educational needs**

ACTA endorses these findings.

Until EAL/D learners are identified as a national priority, it is impossible to determine the extent to which they are included in the 85 per cent of underperforming non-priority equity groups students (p. 81).

ACTA agrees that ‘a new tailored approach is needed from students from priority equity cohorts’, and that ‘reforms should directly tackle the barriers faced by students’ (p. 92).

As indicated in what we have already said, ACTA is concerned that Draft Finding 3.3 fails to reference students’ *languages* as relevant to addressing educational needs. The recommendation that ‘schools adopt culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogies’ appears to assume that language learning needs can be subsumed under the heading of cultural responsiveness (p.94). It is difficult to see any recognition of the pedagogic knowledge and skills we have described in the previous section. The implications of the statement that ‘culturally responsive pedagogy can also encompass bilingual education to ensure that students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are able to engage fully in learning’ require development in other chapters and the discussion of meeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learning needs. As it stands, it appears to us as a tokenistic after-thought.

### **ACTA Recommendation 10**

*In promoting a tailored approach for students from priority equity cohorts, the next NSRA should be explicit about the crucial role of language learning and language-based pedagogy in schools, in particular for EAL/D learners from Indigenous, migrant and refugee backgrounds.*

### 3.3 Draft Finding 3.5 (p. 98): Educational barriers faced by Indigenous EAL/D learners

The Report makes the important observation that Indigeneity does not equate with disadvantage (p. 98). As we have argued, the persistent gap in outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (and probably other priority equity cohorts) is best understood with reference to the barriers they face, not what they may or may not bring to their schooling.

As already mentioned (section 1.2), the repeated failure to meet two key educational targets for Indigenous students – school attendance, and English literacy and numeracy achievement – is greatest in remote areas, where English is effectively a foreign language, and worst in the Northern Territory. As we have argued, failure to meet these targets should not be attributed to either remoteness or the fact that these students speak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and dialects. On the contrary, this reasoning itself contributes to this education policy failure.

Clearly, housing, health and other problems play a role in poor achievement and engagement outcomes for Indigenous students, including in remote areas. In relation to educational factors, a prime contributor must be the nature of the pedagogic interventions that have coincided with worsening outcomes. ACTA's advice from classroom practitioners is that these interventions have themselves contributed to this deteriorating situation. They have occurred as responses to the assessment and reporting measures in the current NSRA, *Closing the Gap* reports and other policies that have previously guided educational provision over past decades (see section 7).

The assessment and reporting measures – centrally the use of NAPLAN testing and mainstream literacy learning progressions – that are used to gauge the learning achievements of Indigenous EAL/D ignore long-standing and repeated evidence that they do not provide an accurate or productive basis for assessing the achievements or needs of those in the process of learning Standard Australian English as an additional language or dialect.<sup>51</sup> Precisely because these assessments are predicated on monolingual, monocultural norms that apply to mother tongue English speakers and an urban

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<sup>51</sup> See:

ACTA submission to Productivity Commission Inquiry into the National Education Evidence Base (DR 120) p.7-9 at: [http://www.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/208903/subdr120-education-evidence.pdf](http://www.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/208903/subdr120-education-evidence.pdf)

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, March 2022. Don't take it as read: Inquiry into adult literacy and its importance. Parliament of Australia, p. 90, para 3.128 at:

[https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/House/Employment\\_Education\\_and\\_Training/AdultLiteracy/Report](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Employment_Education_and_Training/AdultLiteracy/Report);

ACTA submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into adult literacy and its importance, p.34 at: <https://tesol.org.au/acta-submission-to-the-parliamentary-inquiry-into-the-importance-of-adult-literacy/>

Wigglesworth, G, Simpson, J & Loakes, D. 2011, 'NAPLAN language assessments for indigenous children in remote communities: Issues and problems', *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics* (print edition), 34, 3, 320-343.

Angelo, D. 2012. Sad Stories. A preliminary study of NAPLAN practice texts analysing students' second language linguistic resources and the effects of these on their written narratives. In M. Ponsonnet, L. Dao & M. Bowler, M. (eds.), *Proceedings of the 42nd Australian Linguistic Society Conference – 2011*, Australian National University, Canberra ACT, 5-6 December 2011(27-57). Canberra, ACT: Australian Linguistic Society.

Lingard, B, Creagh, S. & Vass G., 2012. Education policy as numbers: Data categories and two Australian cases of misrecognition *Journal of Education Policy*, 27, 3, pp 315-333. Creagh, S. 2014. A critical analysis of problems with the LBOTE category on the NAPLAN test *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 41, 1, pp 1-23.

Angelo, D. 2013. National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) implementation: implications for classroom learning and teaching with recommendations for improvement. *TESOL in Context*, 23(1&2), 53-73.

Dixon, S. & Angelo, D. 2014. Dodgy data, language invisibility and the implications for social inclusion: a critical analysis of Indigenous student language data in Queensland schools. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics* (ARAL), 37(3), 213-233.

Macqueen, S., Knoch, U., Wigglesworth, G., Nordlinger., Singer, R., McNamara, T., & Brickle, R. 2019. The impact of national standardized literacy and numeracy testing on children and teaching staff in remote Australian Indigenous communities. *Language Testing*, vol. 35, 2: pp. 265-287.

English-speaking life-world, Indigenous EAL/D learners are inevitably positioned as ‘falling behind.’ The tunnel vision ‘diagnosis’ of literacy failure sees these learners shoehorned into remedial literacy programs imported from the USA and UK, narrowly focussed on ‘English only’ literacy strategies and backed up by invalid formative assessments that prescribe lock-step teaching and constant going back to a misguided ‘basics’.<sup>52</sup> In fact, these assumptions and the resultant misguided pedagogy help *create* the barriers faced by Indigenous students, including the EAL/D learners among them.

The language ecology conceptual framework that we described in section 1.2 starts with the languages children bring to school. The implications for pedagogy are described in the 2020 Indigenous Languages Report:<sup>53</sup>

*Research since the 1970s has shown that mother-tongue medium instruction is an important precursor to successful second language literacy. Throughout the early years of education, lessons delivered through a child’s first language, with a gradual, staged transition to English as a second language has been demonstrated to improve access to education, as well as English literacy. Using the children’s first language as the medium of instruction has strong community and language maintenance benefits. It enriches the language through focus on the words and sentences needed to teach curriculum content. This includes adult speakers creating educational materials to deal effectively with new concepts, helping children enrich their first language by extending it into modern situations, and helping children deal more effectively with new (academic) concepts through the language they know best. This application extends Indigenous languages into all school curriculum situations. It lays the foundation for the entire speech community to develop shared terminology for contemporary issues, like severe weather events, health and nutrition decisions and civics issues. (p. 60).*

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<sup>52</sup> For example, from 2014-2022, the Commonwealth has provided \$282 million to the NT Government through the Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment for the NT Government’s *Indigenous Education Strategy (IES)*. Central to the IES was to develop the literacy of remote Indigenous students through:

- (i) *Direct Instruction*, a commercial program from the USA, which was rolled in 19 very remote schools from Transition to Secondary; costing \$25-30 million, it was defunded in 2018/19. In 2017, DI was replaced by Read Write Inc (RWI), a commercially produced program from England, which was rolled out across remote and urban schools and is now widely used in Indigenous schools. This program is also unsuitable, especially in remote contexts, because it is designed for British students in remedial literacy classes and assumes English is the learner’s mother tongue; teaches decoding skills using nonsense words, which are mystifying for English language learners; assumes England as the school context. No data currently exists on the impact of RWI on remote students’ literacy skills but informal evidence to ATESOL ACT suggests an outcome similar to DI instruction.
- (ii) two NT developed literacy initiatives - *Literacy and Numeracy Essentials (LANE)* and *Employment Pathways*; by 2021, both had been cancelled. LANE consisted of 20 Learning Progressions and some model teaching programs. Schools were asked to use these when assessing and planning teaching. In practice, these Learning Progressions and programs were not used because schools found the materials confusing and so there was little uptake. Although the handbook acknowledged that the students were EAL/D learners, it contained no EAL/D teaching strategies or methodology. For the NT Government’s description of these initiatives, go to: [Indigenous Education Strategy - issue 14 - Department of Education](#)  
See also Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, Answer to Written Question No. 349 by Mr Guyula to the Minister for Education.

<sup>53</sup> [National Indigenous Languages Report | Office for the Arts, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts](#)

For the wider community, the implications are:

*Where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children come to school speaking Indigenous languages, traditional or new, the employment of adults who speak their languages provides a vital bridge to classroom learning. Through employment in schools, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have had opportunities to engage in research projects in areas such as science and mathematics and gain professional development. School-based language renewal programs are a further source of employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia. For example, in New South Wales (NSW), Language and Culture Nests have been initiated in Bundjalung, Gamilaraay/Yuwaalaraay/ Yuwaalaay, Gumbaynggirr, Wiradjuri and Paakantji. The Nests are firmly focussed on Aboriginal employment, with a coordinator, a head language teacher and Aboriginal language tutors. (p. 29)*

Research highlights the cultural and cognitive benefits of first language instruction for Indigenous languages speaking students and the benefits of bilingual instruction for developing English literacy skills.<sup>54</sup> This strength-based approach builds on and develops the language(s), knowledge and skills that children bring to school, promotes self-worth, wellbeing, confidence and cultural connectedness that fosters academic engagement, participation and achievement in school, as well as future employment. It includes EAL/D assessment and pedagogy, bilingual/biliterate, two-way language learning, and culturally appropriate curriculum and resources.<sup>55</sup>

The 2012 Parliamentary Inquiry into Language Learning in Indigenous Communities made 30 recommendations, many directed to languages education, for example:

*incorporating an acknowledgement and focus of Indigenous languages into the Closing the Gap framework, expanding the Indigenous Languages Support program and prioritising the development of language nests ... resourcing bilingual school education programs for Indigenous communities where the child's first language is an Indigenous language, developing strategies for training Indigenous language teachers to ensure improved access to full qualifications, accreditation and career pathways, compulsory English as an Additional Language or Dialect training for all teaching degrees and mandatory EAL/D and*

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<sup>54</sup> Collier, V. & Thomas, W. (2017) Validating the power of bilingual schooling: Thirty two years of large scale longitudinal research. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*: 37, p. 203-217.

Devlin, B.C., Disbray, S. & Friedman Devlin, N.R. (eds.) (2017). *History of Bilingual Education in the Northern Territory: People, programs and policies*. Springer.

Graham, Beth. 2020. *Living and Learning in a Yolŋu World: Recollections & Reflections*. ISBN 978-0-646-82223-5.

Guenther, J. et al. (2014) *Red Dirt Thinking on Remote Educational Advantage* at:

<https://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=197109386575105;res=IELHSS>

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, March 2022. Don't take it as read: Inquiry into adult literacy and its importance. Parliament of Australia, p. 90, para 3.128 at:

[https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/House/Employment\\_Education\\_and\\_Training/Adultliteracy/Report](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Employment_Education_and_Training/Adultliteracy/Report); p. 43, paras. 2.88-2.90.

Poetsch, S. (2020). Unrecognised language teaching: Teaching Australian Curriculum content in remote Aboriginal community schools. *TESOL in Context*, 29(1), 37-58.

Van Gelderen, B. (2017). 'Growing our own': A 'two way', place-based approach to Indigenous initial teacher education in remote Northern Territory. *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*, 27(1), 14-28.

Wigglesworth, G. (2020). Remote Indigenous education and translanguaging. *TESOL in Context*, 29(1), 95-113.

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, [Education | Australians Together](#)



*cultural awareness training for teacher working in Indigenous communities, and - improving community access to language materials through a dedicated Indigenous languages archive at AIATSIS and the sharing of resources with schools and educational institutions.*<sup>56</sup>

The findings and recommendations of this and other reports have been ignored in all Indigenous plans, strategies and reviews.<sup>57</sup> Language learning issues of Indigenous students were ignored in the recent *Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education*<sup>58</sup> and were entirely absent from the Productivity Commission's 2019 *Indigenous Evaluation Strategy* Issues paper.<sup>59</sup> The characteristics of effective remote schools that achieve good learning outcomes for Indigenous students have been well documented but not systemically implemented.<sup>60</sup>

On the ground, substantive, quality bilingual/bi-literacy programs have all but disappeared,<sup>61</sup> as have Aboriginal teachers and teacher assistants, while the special purpose Indigenous teacher training program at Batchelor College has closed (see section 5.6).<sup>62</sup> Despite a 25 per cent increase in

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<sup>56</sup> Citation is from <https://closingthegap.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/ctg-report-2018.pdf?a=1>

*Our Land Our Languages* at:

[http://www.aphref.aph.gov.au/house\\_committee\\_atsia\\_languages2\\_report\\_full%20report%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.aphref.aph.gov.au/house_committee_atsia_languages2_report_full%20report%20(1).pdf)

<sup>57</sup> The 2012 Inquiry recommended incorporating Indigenous languages in the closing the gap framework, resourcing bilingual programs for indigenous communities, instituting compulsory EAL/D training for all teachers working in Indigenous community schools and more appropriate EAL/D assessment of Indigenous students' language and literacy proficiency needs.

For other reports whose recommendations have been ignored, see:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014 at:

[http://scseec.edu.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/ATSI%20documents/ATSIEAP\\_web\\_version\\_final.pdf](http://scseec.edu.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/ATSI%20documents/ATSIEAP_web_version_final.pdf);

National Aboriginal and ACTA/ALAA/ALS joint submission to the consultation on the Plan at:

[http://www.tesol.org.au/files/files/141\\_IEAP\\_Submission\\_final.pdf](http://www.tesol.org.au/files/files/141_IEAP_Submission_final.pdf)

Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy 2015 at:

[http://www.scseec.edu.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/ATSI%20documents/DECD\\_NATSI\\_EducationStrategy.pdf](http://www.scseec.edu.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/ATSI%20documents/DECD_NATSI_EducationStrategy.pdf);

Evaluation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010-2014 Final Evaluation Report at:

[http://www.educationcouncil.edu.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/ATSI%20documents/ATSI%202010-2014%20Final%20Evaluation%20Report/1Final\\_Evaluation\\_ATSIEAP\\_ACILAllenConsulting.pdf](http://www.educationcouncil.edu.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/ATSI%20documents/ATSI%202010-2014%20Final%20Evaluation%20Report/1Final_Evaluation_ATSIEAP_ACILAllenConsulting.pdf);

ACTA submission to the Inquiry at: [http://www.tesol.org.au/files/files/169\\_govt\\_inquiry\\_ATSI\\_langs.pdf](http://www.tesol.org.au/files/files/169_govt_inquiry_ATSI_langs.pdf)

We note also Article 14 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.
2. Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.
3. States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.

[UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples | Australian Human Rights Commission](http://www.unhcr.org/refugees/pdf/4c7b2204.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> [https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/01218\\_independent\\_review\\_accessible.pdf](https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/01218_independent_review_accessible.pdf)

<sup>59</sup> See ACTA submission to Productivity Commission's *Indigenous Evaluation Strategy* at: [https://tesol.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/628\\_Indigenous\\_Evaluation\\_Submission\\_from\\_the\\_Australian\\_Council\\_of\\_TESOL\\_Associations\\_final\\_v.2.pdf](https://tesol.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/628_Indigenous_Evaluation_Submission_from_the_Australian_Council_of_TESOL_Associations_final_v.2.pdf)

<sup>60</sup> National Curriculum Services (2012) *Success in remote schools* at:

[http://www.whatworks.edu.au/upload/1341805220784\\_file\\_SuccessinRemoteSchools2012.pdf](http://www.whatworks.edu.au/upload/1341805220784_file_SuccessinRemoteSchools2012.pdf) . Interestingly, this report can no longer be accessed.

<sup>61</sup> The effectiveness of the “two way stair case” bilingual program model for Indigenous students' learning was well documented before these programs were disbanded. See: [ATESOL-NT-Supplementary-Submission-to-the-Inquiry-into-Adult-Literacy-and-its-Importance.pdf](https://www.atesol.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/628_Indigenous_Evaluation_Submission_from_the_Australian_Council_of_TESOL_Associations_final_v.2.pdf) ([atesolnt.org.au](https://www.atesol.org.au))

Nicholls, C. (2005). Death by a thousand cuts: Indigenous language bilingual education programmes in the Northern Territory of Australia, 1972–1998 *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 8(2-3), 160-177.

<sup>62</sup> ACTA's information on these issues results from our close collaboration with colleagues in our member association ATESOL. We lack the human resources to investigate the extent to which what we report applies more widely.

expenditure on educational provision for Indigenous students,<sup>63</sup> the actual budgets received by remote schools – at least in the NT – have dropped dramatically due to the regressive “effective enrolment” funding formula (see section 3.4 below on accountability). From anecdotal evidence (since data is not publicly available), we know that, in remote NT schools, inexperienced teachers are commonly employed on short term contracts (some as short as 10 weeks), while qualified EAL/D teachers are rarely found. School facilities have deteriorated.<sup>64</sup>

ACTA realises that some of these problems lie beyond the mandate of the current Productivity Commission Report on the NSRA. However, until the problems relating to pedagogy and the supply of appropriate teachers are resolved, talk of responding to remote Indigenous students’ needs and improving their educational outcomes is futile. We support the recommendation repeated in the CIS *Mind the Gap* report for the appointment of an Indigenous Education Commissioner,<sup>65</sup> conditional on his/her brief including development of a *National Languages and Literacy Education Strategy* for Indigenous students. The Strategy should be developed in collaboration with relevant Indigenous leaders and with advice from a representative, expert Council with recognised expertise in Indigenous education, linguistics and language learning. It should be tasked to take account of the findings of the 2020 Indigenous Languages Report, and would aim at leveraging students’ home languages and their EAL/D learning resources for cultural agency, school engagement and academic achievement. It should assist in developing a network of schools with both-way bilingual/biliteracy programs that are co-designed with local communities, accompanied by reinvestment in training and employment of Indigenous teachers in remote, regional and urban schools, and supported by quarantined transparent matched funding from state and territory governments and informed by language research.

Unless EAL/D learners, including Indigenous EAL/D learners, are designated as a priority equity cohort within the NSRA, the current situation in which their specific needs are overlooked – or placed under the tokenistic heading of “cultural recognition” – will persist.

### **Recommendation 11**

***In pursuing a language tailored approach to address systemic linguistic and educational barriers experienced by Indigenous learners in rural and remote schools, the next NSRA should initiate a National Indigenous Languages and Literacy Education Strategy aimed at leveraging students’ home languages resources and English language learning to lift their cultural agency, school engagement and academic achievement.***

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<sup>63</sup> Fahey, G., (2021) *Mind the Gap: Understanding the Indigenous education gap and how to close it*. Centre for Independent Studies, p.8, at: [rr41.pdf \(cis.org.au\)](#); [Closing the Gap | Closing The Gap \(niaa.gov.au\)](#).

<sup>64</sup> ATESOL NT, 2021, Supplementary Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Adult Literacy and its Importance at: <https://atesolnt.org.au/wp-content/uploads/ATESOL-NT-Supplementary-Submission-to-the-Inquiry-into-Adult-Literacy-and-its-Importance.pdf>

<sup>65</sup> Fahey, G., (2021) *Mind the Gap: Understanding the Indigenous education gap and how to close it*. Centre for Independent Studies, p. 24, at: [rr41.pdf \(cis.org.au\)](#); [Closing the Gap | Closing The Gap \(niaa.gov.au\)](#). The Commissioner would report to the federal Education Minister on the effective resourcing, implementation, evaluation and development of the strategy.

### 3.4 Draft Recommendation 3.1 and Information Request 3.3: Implementation plans

ACTA fully endorses Draft Recommendation 3.1.

However, if EAL/D learners are not designated as a national priority equity cohort:

- the barriers they face will not be addressed
- policies and programs to lift their outcomes will not be instituted
- progress reports will remain silent, obscure and evasive on what is being done and what has been achieved.

The proposed enhanced accountability mechanisms for bilateral agreements and associated reporting arrangements in relation to the EAL/D learner cohort would impose an additional administrative burden on jurisdictions. However, the benefits gained would outweigh these costs because policies and funding would be more effectively targeted, transparent and accountable. These benefits would ultimately avoid the educational futility and financial waste attaching to failed initiatives.

The involvement of practising EAL/D teachers and researchers in decision-making about reporting arrangements would help ensure that policy concerning EAL/D teaching and learning is informed by ‘people with lived experience’ and appropriate expertise, helping to ‘close the distance between national policy making and classroom practice.’ See, for example, our offer of hosting a teacher forum in the Introduction to this submission.

Data on EAL/D proficiency is collected in almost all jurisdictions but is not reported in the public domain or to the Commonwealth. The value of the human and financial resources used in collecting this data would be maximised if results were reported in the public domain, including in *Closing the Gap* reports. For national reporting purposes, State/Territory measures can be maintained but reported in relation to the broad phases of the ACARA EAL/D Learning Progression. ACTA is aware that the process of developing a nationally agreed measure of English language proficiency has been difficult (see section 7). However, we are of the view that, in this case, the desire for perfection is a costly enemy of making progress on urgent need to identify the national EAL/D learner cohort.

### 3.5 Information request 3.4: Transparency of funding

A succession of Commonwealth and State Auditor-Generals’ reports has drawn attention to the lack of transparency and accountability in Gonski needs-based funding for schools, including the low English proficiency loading, and the impossibility of ascertaining its outcomes.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> See Sydney Morning Herald at:

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/government-rejects-bipartisan-call-for-more-scrutiny-of-school-funding-20191205-p53h63.html>;

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/education-department-loses-track-of-millions-in-disadvantage-funding-20200408-p54ia1.html>

A 2017 Auditor-General ANAO Report found that the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training had not: i) effectively monitored distribution of funding to approved system authorities to assure that funding was being allocated on a needs basis; ii) monitored whether approved system authorities’ funding models were publicly available and transparent; iii) established processes that provided the level of transparency and accountability envisaged under the Act; or iv) fully utilised available data to inform the development of current and future educational policy. In 2018, a Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit endorsed these recommendations and further recommended changes to the legislation and regulations that required the Department to undertake compliance monitoring, a recommendation subsequently rejected by the Department. A 2021 follow-up to the 2017 audit found the Department had not made sufficient progress in ensuring transparency of Australian Government funding allocations as prescribed in the Act, and



At the school level, a national EAL/D survey conducted by ACTA in 2016 found that dedicated EAL/D provision in schools was being substantially eroded due to school autonomy and flexible resource management policies using one-line/global budget allocations resulting in a complete loss of transparency in use of funding for EAL/D learners.<sup>67</sup>

In section 3.3, we alluded to the erosion of actual budgets to remote schools in the NT as a result of the “effective enrolment” funding formula, despite the increase in overall expenditure on NT school education. This formula determines allocations to school based on student attendance for the previous year irrespective of enrolments in the current year.

A colleague in the Northern Territory has been investigating the impact of this formula on school budgets in NE Arnhem Land, based on questions asked in the Northern Territory Parliament. Since effective enrolment funding methodology began in 2013, attendance has spiralled downwards contributing to the overall worsening attendance documented in Closing the Gap reports. A vicious cycle has been created whereby declining budgets based on the previous year’s attendance undermine the school’s capacity to deploy the staff and resources necessary to retain newly enrolling students, who therefore drop out. A major discrepancy exists between those enrolled and those who are funded in any given year. For example, at the beginning of 2022, 2,638 students were enrolled in NE Arnhem Land schools but those schools received funding for only 1,514 students. See Appendix A for enrolment and attendance figures for 2021.

Table 3 below shows the declining budgets for three small Indigenous Arnhem Land community schools from 2015 to 2022.

**Table 2: Budgets for 2015 and 2021 in three remote NE Arnhem Land schools**

School name	2015 <sup>68</sup> School Resourcing Model	2022 <sup>69</sup> School Resourcing Model	Percentage funding decrease
Gapuwiyak School	2,948,464	2,412,742	18%
Maningrida School	6,751,686	5,077,280	25%
Shepherdson College	5,704,395	5,628,674	1%

noted that implementation in this area was not scheduled until 2022. A 2020 NSW Auditor-General’s audit report found that the NSW Department of Education and Training did not have adequate oversight of how schools were using their Gonski needs-based funding to improve student outcomes since it introduced its Local Schools Local Decisions policy in 2014, allocating hundreds of millions of additional funding for disadvantaged students without keeping track of how it was spent or whether it was helping those students.

<sup>67</sup> See Submission 108: Australian Council of TESOL Associations, 2017. Submission and Supplementary Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Migrant Settlement Outcomes at:

[https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Joint/Migration/settlementoutcomes/Submissions](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Migration/settlementoutcomes/Submissions).

The 2016 ACTA survey found that Commonwealth English language proficiency needs-based funding for schools was often not reaching the EAL/D student target group it was intended to assist. School autonomy and flexible funding policies were actively encouraging diversion of earmarked funds away from the EAL/D student target group resulting in the erosion of specialist EAL/D programs, leadership, staffing and expertise in schools.

<sup>68</sup> 2021, Answer from NT Minister for Education to Yingiya Guyula Question No. 275 (2). Retrieved from [https://parliament.nt.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/1088166/Answer-to-Written-Question-275.pdf](https://parliament.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1088166/Answer-to-Written-Question-275.pdf)

<sup>69</sup> Answer from NT Education Minister of Education to Yingiya Guyula Question 333 (1). Retrieved from [https://parliament.nt.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/1126326/Answer-to-Written-Question-333.pdf](https://parliament.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1126326/Answer-to-Written-Question-333.pdf)

The figures in Table 2 are in stark contrast to the My School website's budget figures for these same schools, which shows an increase in funding from 2016 to 2020 of 14, 12 and 24 per cent respectively.<sup>70</sup>

The 'lived experience' of this policy can be seen in the photos below.<sup>71</sup>



In 2011 this remote community school had over 75 staff.



In 2021 the same school had approximately 42 staff.

<sup>70</sup> Gapuwiyaak 2016 <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50057/finances/2016>;

Gapuwiyaak 2020 <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50057/finances/2020>

Maningrida 2016 <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50061/finances/2016>

Maningrida 2020 <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50061/finances/2020>

Shepherdson College 2016 <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50066/finances/2016>

Shepherdson College 2020 <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50066/finances/2020>

The discrepancy between amounts was explained by the Minister as follows:

*Once Commonwealth Government funding is received by the Territory, it is pooled with NT Government funding for distribution through the school resourcing package, which includes a student needs-based funding formula.*

Answer from NT Education Minister to Yingiya Guyula Question 334. Retrieved from

[https://parliament.nt.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/552681/Aqst-334-Guyula-Commonwealth-Funding.pdf](https://parliament.nt.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0009/552681/Aqst-334-Guyula-Commonwealth-Funding.pdf).

The problem with this reply is that it is virtually impossible (at least for an interested outsider) to determine what the breakdown is in allocations and their rationale. An indication lies in the fact that the NT Department of Education employs 4,400 staff, of whom only 2,113 are teachers. See: Department of Education, DoE Annual Report, 2022, p. 29, and Answer NT Minister of Education to Ms Hersey Question 398 (1). Retrieved from

[https://parliament.nt.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/1132727/Answer-to-Written-Question-398.pdf](https://parliament.nt.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0005/1132727/Answer-to-Written-Question-398.pdf)

In 2021 the NT DoE's budget was \$1.15 billion with allocations to schools totalling \$472million, i.e. less than half went directly to staffing and resourcing these schools. Answer from NT Minister of Education to Question 333 (6 & 7) from Yingiya Guyula. Retrieved from [https://parliament.nt.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/1126326/Answer-to-Written-Question-333.pdf](https://parliament.nt.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1126326/Answer-to-Written-Question-333.pdf)

<sup>71</sup> From ATESOL NT, 2021, Supplementary Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Adult Literacy and its Importance, p. 17 at: <https://atesolnt.org.au/wp-content/uploads/ATESOL-NT-Supplementary-Submission-to-the-Inquiry-into-Adult-Literacy-and-its-Importance.pdf>

## ACTA Recommendation 12

***The next NSRA should specify enhanced funding transparency and accountability mechanisms for bilateral agreements, implementation plans and associated reporting arrangements in relation to the EAL/D learner cohort.***

### 3.6 Information Request 3.5: Embedding the perspectives of priority cohorts

ACTA welcomes the suggestion of embedding the perspectives of priority equity cohorts in national education policy and institutions.

A major barrier to increasing engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is the use of all-purpose professional evaluators who work to a generalised consultation ‘recipe’ that can be applied to any/all policies and programs. Authentic engagement requires much more than this. It must be specifically directed to the actual policy/program under review and engage with all stakeholders, including communities, as described earlier. Most importantly, it must also allow the time necessary for this engagement, which for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, especially in remote areas, may take longer than for other reviews.

Interestingly, the perspectives of at least some Aboriginal leaders go way beyond ‘consultation’.<sup>72</sup> In a speech to the NT Parliament on 16/08/2018, the Independent Member for NE Arnhem Land said:

*Current government policies are about community-led schools. I am eager to see real changes. I do not mean through the few community consultations, I mean handing over authority to the Aboriginal nations so that we can appoint our teachers, school leaders and strong ESL teachers, we can decide the direction of our curriculum—both Western and Yolngu. We can revitalise Yolngu teacher training and homeland education.*

*Our schools should be filled with Yolngu educators, elders and knowledge. We must not place our children in a position where they are torn between two paths, learning very little from either or falling into the gap. We want our children to have two-way education, two paths travelling so closely side by side that our children can walk on both paths. This is how we will close the education gap.*

As an example of the distance between policy makers and the grass roots, we quote from one of members of the Remote Schools Attendance Strategy:

*The Remote Schools Attendance Strategy receives incredible amounts of funding, and while the intentions may have some merit, the program implementation is left wanting, and, in a number of schools I know, the accountability seems vacuous at best. The program was and continues to be a mess. It simply doesn't work. The staff aren't committed. The managers, who live in ... [State capital city], are too far away to be able to keep tabs. Other communities experience the same disorganisation and ineffectiveness. Significant dollars have been invested in this program through different service providers. As principal, I was asked to evaluate*

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<sup>72</sup> In Social Work, and more broadly, this interaction is being framed as ‘decolonisation’. See:

Russ-Smith, J. (2019). Indigenous Social Work and a Wiradyuri Framework to Practice.

Walter, M., & Baltra-Ulloa, J. (2019). Australian social work is white. In *Our Voices: Aboriginal Social Work* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 103-116). Red Globe Press.

*the program on a semestral basis. A question I kept asking the Department of Education in my feedback to them and in person to the official in Prime Minister & Cabinet was ‘How is this being evaluated?’ No matter what feedback I gave them about what was and wasn’t working, there was no change in how the program operated. There was zero change. I found out that internal feedback to the PM&C from the service provider was heavily skewed to show their operations in a positive light. In fact, PM&C were aware of the shortcomings, but chose not to respond in any meaningful way. Result: no improvement in outcomes and this practice has continued over at least 6 years. Money continues to be poured into in a service provider that does not seem to be held accountable for the role that it is supposed to play. Is the PM&C even held accountable? “Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?” I hear you ask.<sup>73</sup>*

The next intergovernmental agreement on school education should embed priority equity cohort perspectives in national education policies and institutions, including in outcomes, targets, and policy initiatives. However, unless EAL/D learners are designated as a national priority equity cohort, these perspectives will remain excluded. Although Australia prides itself on its multiculturalism, predominantly monolingual assumptions still pervade education policy-making and school operations, as they do in the Interim Report.

The evidence base used to develop current and emerging policies and programs does not reflect the extensive and established body of practical and research knowledge regarding the learning and teaching of second/additional languages and dialects.

In regard to current concerns about the impact of COVID on schooling, a national research agenda is needed to investigate (i) the nature, extent and location of COVID-19 impacts on EAL/D learners in schools, (ii) the effectiveness of intensive tutoring programs for these students (see section 3.2 above), and (iii) high-impact, interactive, face-to face and online EAL/D pedagogies to overcome their learning losses.<sup>74</sup> These research projects could be included on AERO’s workplan or outsourced to tertiary institutions by the Commonwealth Department of Education.

### **ACTA Recommendation 13**

***To ensure embedding of EAL/D learner perspectives in the new NSRA:***

- ***a national consultative body on EAL/D education should be established, comprising educators and researchers with recognised expertise in second/additional learning and teaching to support the design, implementation and monitoring of the initiatives of the next NSRA***
- ***a national research agenda should be developed in consultation with EAL/D educators to address the current pedagogical needs of EAL/D learners and teachers and underpin the implementation of the next NSRA.***

<sup>73</sup> Re-quoted from [Submission 87 - Australian Council of TESOL Associations \(ACTA\) - Indigenous Evaluation Strategy - Project \(pc.gov.au\)](https://www.pc.gov.au/submissions/acta/indigenous_evaluation_strategy), p. 42

<sup>74</sup> See: <https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/news/blog-why-it-is-important-for-schools-to-support-eal-learners-to-mitigate-language-and-learning-loss-and-how-best-to-do-it/>;  
EAL: Pupils who speak English as an additional language need more support after COVID, at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/57475574>; <https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/eal-programme/guidance/effective-teaching-of-eal-learners/>

## 4. Student wellbeing

### 4.1 *Draft Finding 4.1: Students' wellbeing and support*

#### 4.1.1 *In general*

ACTA welcomes the Report's recognition of student wellbeing, its impact on student learning and engagement and teacher effectiveness, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic, and the need to do more nationally. The research cited in the report establishes a clear link between poor student wellbeing and student learning outcomes, particularly for certain student groups, and warrants a national approach through the NSRA.

The linguistic diversity in Australian schools has major implications for EAL/D learners' personal, social and academic wellbeing. This section focuses on a key missing dimension of student wellbeing that specifically affects EAL/D learners from Indigenous, migrant and refugee backgrounds – ***language-mediated wellbeing*** - and its influence on schooling outcomes. In this regard, first and additional languages capabilities need to be included as factors in the youth wellbeing process model outlined on p.108 of the Report.

#### 4.1.2 *Language-mediated wellbeing of First Nations students*

Most wellbeing research has not acknowledged the place of people's languages or the language ecologies within which they are placed. Policy, provision and program evaluation has generally ignored the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's language repertoires and language ecologies.

Angelo et al. (2019) have outlined a strength-based *Wellbeing and Indigenous Language Ecologies* (WILE) framework for addressing the complex relations between Indigenous people, the languages they use and own, and their language-mediated wellbeing.<sup>75</sup> The framework identifies three interrelated dimensions in which languages (traditional and new Indigenous languages and Englishes) mediate Indigenous people's wellbeing:

##### 1. **Different language ecologies:**

- a. traditional Indigenous language is a first language *and* English is an additional language
- b. new Indigenous language (a contact language, such as a creole) is a first language *and* traditional Indigenous language and English are additional languages
- c. English is a first language *and* a traditional Indigenous language is an additional language.

##### 2. **Contexts of languages use:**

- a. Language(s) for being
- b. Language(s) for engagement and access
- c. Language(s) to earn a livelihood

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<sup>75</sup> Angelo, D., O'Shannessy, C., Simpson, J., Kral, I., Smith, H., & Browne, E. (2019). Well-being and Indigenous Language Ecologies (WILE): a strengths-based approach: Literature review, National Indigenous Languages Report, Pillar 2.



### 3. Language-mediated wellbeing:

Language(s) connected to spiritual, land-based, cultural identity; emotional health, physical health; educational, economic and restorative wellbeing.

The ways in which Indigenous languages relate to wellbeing are mediated by factors such as the local configuration of languages (the language ecology) and an individual's language repertoire (the languages people speak/use and the extent/level to which they are used). Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have different language repertoires depending on the part of the country they are from, their families' histories and their individual life experiences. Pedagogic approaches, such as the '3-way strong' approach, have been developed to strengthen children's access to and repertoires in the local traditional language, the new language, and English as the language of wider communication.<sup>76</sup>

The three broad contexts in which traditional languages, new languages, and Aboriginal English languages may be used are detailed below.

***Languages for being*** involves use of both traditional languages learned as first or second languages and new Languages. Identifying with a traditional or a new language links people with a group, with a shared history and with an area of country. Having this identification, shared history and group/land link acknowledged by others strengthens both the individual's sense of identity and that of the group.<sup>77</sup> Traditional Indigenous languages provide enduring links to country and culture, a sense of identity and community and a (potential) means of healing and redress. *Languages for being* therefore relates to developing healthy lives, healthy home environments, safe and supportive communities, and to ensuring that children's early development is supported, along with their subsequent education.

***Languages for engagement and access*** involves use of Indigenous languages spoken as first languages, both traditional languages and new languages learned, and English as an additional language. Language proficiency is a strength which should be built on throughout the person's life, first through education and then in the workplace. In education, children can participate actively if curriculum and pedagogy acknowledge them as L1 language speakers and/or as L2 learners of English in an English-medium setting. Ongoing training and education opportunities should take their language backgrounds into account, including increasing their individual confidence in standard English or initiatives that increase their access to services provided in standard English. Languages for engagement and access relates to access to services which are essential for developing healthy lives, healthy home environments, safe and supportive communities. It also relates crucially to ensuring that children's early development is supported, along with their subsequent education.

***Languages and livelihoods*** involves both traditional languages and new languages learned as first languages, and also traditional languages that are learned as second languages. Knowledge of Indigenous languages is a potential strength of Indigenous employees. It may be an explicit selection criterion for jobs or an asset for effective communication in the community. A range of economic

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<sup>76</sup> D. Angelo & N. Carter (2015). Schooling within shifting langscapes: Educational responses in complex Indigenous language contact ecologies. In Androula Yiakoumetti (ed.) *Multilingualism and language education. Sociolinguistic and pedagogical perspectives from Commonwealth countries*. Cambridge University Press.

[Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Statement \(education.qld.gov.au\)](https://www.education.qld.gov.au/Aboriginal_and_Torres_Strait_Islander_Languages_Statement)  
[PUB strength-based-approaches final 2020.pdf \(strongersmarter.com.au\)](https://www.strongersmarter.com.au/PUB_strength-based-approaches_final_2020.pdf)

<sup>77</sup> Rosalind Berry and Joyce Hudson (1997). *Making the jump : a resource book for teachers of Aboriginal students*. Broome, W.A.: Catholic Education Office, Kimberley Region.

benefits and opportunities is associated with speaking Indigenous languages, particularly but not exclusively in the domains of art and culture, land care, tourism, education and training, broadcasting and interpreting and translating. It leads directly to employment increasing economic participation as well as to developing healthy lives, healthy home environments, safe and supportive communities, best practice education for children, and good community and organisational governance.

The relationship between Indigenous languages, practices and wellbeing in key life areas is summarised with supporting studies in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Summary – Indicators, studies and practices of Indigenous languages and well-being<sup>78</sup>**

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Relationship between Indigenous languages and wellbeing</b>	<b>Practice</b>	<b>Literature</b>
<b>1. Land-based</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land and language are interrelated</li> <li>• Indigenous languages include cultural knowledge of ecology and geography</li> <li>• Story, songs, dance, etc. link language landscape and culture</li> <li>• Well-being occurs when the relationship is strong</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous people know and use language relating to country</li> <li>• Indigenous people know and use songs, stories, dance, etc. relating to country</li> </ul>	Biddle & Swee (2012) Chandler & Lalonde (1998) Douglas (2011) Morelli (2017) Oster et al. (2014) Reid et al. (2016) Rumsey (1993) Schultz et al. (2018) Commonwealth of Australia (2012) Williams (2011)
<b>2. Spiritual</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link to the spirit world is fundamental to many Indigenous people's worldviews</li> <li>• There are often specific language genres to link to the spirit world</li> <li>• These genres have developed to meet changing environments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous people's use and knowledge of language which connects to the spirit world</li> </ul>	Grieves & the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health Australia (2009) Bracknell (2017) Porooh et al. (2011) Williams (2011) Commonwealth of Australia (2012) Lewellan (2016) McIvor et al. (2009) Houkamau & Sibley (2010)
<b>3. Cultural identity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interconnectedness of language, culture and identity emphasised by Indigenous people</li> <li>• Use of Indigenous languages leads to engagement in culturally responsive organisations</li> <li>• Language is part of cultural continuity which contributes to well-being</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous language in cultural practices</li> <li>• Indigenous people's use and knowledge of Indigenous language in cultural networks and organisations</li> <li>• Organisations using Indigenous languages as part of culturally responsive approach</li> </ul>	Archibald & Aboriginal Healing Foundation Canada (2011) Browne (2019) Chandler & Lalonde (1998) Collard et al. (2016) Dockery (2010) Houkamau & Sibley (2010) Marmion et al. (2014) Oster et al. (2014) Reid et al. (2016) Walsh (2018) Williams (2011)

<sup>78</sup> Angelo et al. 2019, p55



<b>4. Emotional health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enforced loss of Indigenous languages has resulted in intergenerational trauma</li> <li>• The use of Indigenous languages provides emotional resilience</li> <li>• The use of Indigenous languages encourages meaningful interventions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health providers' use of Indigenous languages and associated cultural concepts</li> </ul>	Bjerregard & Curtis (2002) Chandler & Lalonde (1998) Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (1997) Dyall et al. (2014) Fiedeldey-Van Dijk et al. (2017) Haggarty et al. (2008) Hallet et al. (2007) Herman-Stahl et al. (2003) Morice (1978) Nagel & Thompson (2007) Opai (2017) Whitbeck et al. (2002) Whitbeck et al. (2004) Williams (2011)
<b>5. Physical health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication issues based on language &amp; culture may affect interactions</li> <li>• Use of a Traditional Language reflecting cultural strength can be protective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous people's knowledge and use of Indigenous language referring to cultural concepts of physical health</li> </ul>	Amery (2017) Chandler & Lalonde (1998) Coe et al. (2004) Flood & Rohloff (2018) MacLean et al. (2017) Pitama et al. (2011) Strong et al. (2015) Sun & Buys (2013) Vass (2011)
<b>6. Educational</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning and Indigenous languages are interrelated, providing cognitive &amp; social strength</li> <li>• Learning occurs best through children's first languages or the language of their culture</li> <li>• Indigenous people govern language learning initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous languages are incorporated meaningfully into the curriculum</li> <li>• Communities are involved in governing Indigenous language teaching</li> </ul>	United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (2018) Commonwealth of Australia (2012) Lester et al. (2013) Wigglesworth & Billington (2013) Morcom (2017) Guèvremont & Kohen (2012) Williams (2011) Guèvremont & Kohen (2017b) Guèvremont & Kohen (2017a) Taylor & Coetzee (2016) McLeod et al. (2014) Angelo & Poetsch (2019) Carter et al (2020)
<b>7. Economic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism validates Indigenous language use</li> <li>• With tourism and art production Indigenous language remains culturally relevant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge and use of Indigenous language gives opportunities to engage in the culture-based market economy</li> </ul>	Altman(2009) Capone et al. (2013) Chiswick et al. (2000) Koenig et al. (2011) Nguyen et al. (2017) Whitney-Squire (2016) Whitney-Squire et al. (2018)
<b>8. Restorative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledgement of role of colonisation in Indigenous languages</li> <li>• Engaging in reconciliation to restore/support Indigenous languages is important</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of Indigenous languages is promoted</li> </ul>	McConvell & Thieberger (2001) Commonwealth of Australia (2012) United Nations (2007) Williams (2011) Angelo, Fraser & Yeatman (2019) Angelo & Poetsch (2019)

#### 4.1.3 Boarding schools: Are they promoting or undermining the wellbeing of students from remote Indigenous communities?

Since 2015, there has been a 53 per cent national increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students attending boarding schools, which are now the main or only pathway for those in remote communities to access post-primary education.<sup>79</sup> From the perspective of language-mediated wellbeing just described, this policy would seem profoundly misplaced and even dangerous for at least some students. Relocation to boarding schools far from their familiar environment, and sometimes the student's own State or Territory, has disconnected these students from their communities and language ecologies. ACTA's advice is that these students are frequently placed in a total English-speaking environment, which does not address these students' EAL/D learning needs. As reported to us by a literacy consultant working State-wide to support boarding schools, teachers there are ill-prepared – even shocked – when they find these students in their classes, as are their fellow-students.

Data does not appear to exist in the public domain on the numbers of remote Indigenous students who drop out from boarding school and return to their communities.<sup>80</sup> ACTA has been informed that suicides of students in boarding schools (or after having left them) have generated Indigenous community fears about sending their children to these schools. To our knowledge, there have been no publicly available independent evaluations of Indigenous scholarship programs, partnerships, transition support services or specific boarding school programs. Irrespective of the next NSRA, such an evaluation is urgently required.

#### 4.1.4 Language-mediated wellbeing of students from migrant and refugee backgrounds

Ideally, English language learners from migrant and refugee backgrounds are in the process of becoming bilingual or multilingual users of English. They enter the Australian school system with language skills and cultural and cognitive abilities, applying their linguistic and cultural resources to their English language and curriculum learning.

Where these students maintain and develop their heritage language alongside their English learning, rather than losing it to English, this *additive* bilingualism has been shown to be positively associated with parent-child communication, family relations and child wellbeing throughout the primary and secondary school years.<sup>81</sup> Students with strong bilingual profiles also experience acculturation benefits having positive identification with their heritage culture and self-esteem in adolescence.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Isabella Higgins, November 8, 2020 ABC Darwin.

<sup>80</sup> Statistics to support the above are on page 6 of the 2020 study, Boarding off Country. See: [https://caepr.cass.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/docs/2020/9/NT\\_Ed\\_Study\\_2020\\_7\\_Sept\\_1.pdf](https://caepr.cass.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/docs/2020/9/NT_Ed_Study_2020_7_Sept_1.pdf).

<sup>81</sup> Mueller, L. M., Howard, K., Wilson, E., Gibson, J., & Katsos, N. (2020). Bilingualism in the family and child well-being: A scoping review. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 24(5-6), 1049-1070;  
De Houwer, A. (2015). Harmonious bilingual development: Young families' well-being in language contact situations. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 19(2), 169-184.

<sup>82</sup> Portes, A., & Hao, L. (2002). The price of uniformity: Language, family and personality adjustment in the immigrant second generation. *Ethnic and racial studies*, 25(6), 889-912.

Oh, J. S., & Fuligni, A. J. (2010). The role of heritage language development in the ethnic identity and family relationships of adolescents from immigrant backgrounds. *Social development*, 19(1), 202-220;

Gonzales-Backen, M. A., Bámaca-Colbert, M. Y., Noah, A. J., & Rivera, P. M. (2017). Cultural profiles among Mexican-origin girls: Associations with psychosocial adjustment. *Journal of Latina/o Psychology*, 5(3), 157.

Bilingualism also brings cognitive and neurological benefits throughout the lifespan and contributes to language minority students' academic wellbeing during and after their schooling.<sup>83</sup> As first and second languages are interdependent and mutually reinforce each other, they positively impact academic achievement, high school completion and post-school study.<sup>84</sup> Balanced bilinguals, especially those with high proficiency in heritage language literacy, have enhanced academic mobility and generally earn more than English dominant language minority students at the beginning of their career.<sup>85</sup>

Language minority students' heritage languages therefore are a key factor in their social, cultural and academic wellbeing. Developing and maintaining it should be included in any efforts aimed at improving student wellbeing.

In this context, a promising recent development has been growing interest in and research on the construct and measurement of 'academic wellbeing', integrating concepts of student goal orientation, subjective wellbeing, and academic achievement.<sup>86</sup> Closely related to academic wellbeing is the notion of 'academic buoyancy' or positive, constructive, and adaptive responses to the types of challenges and setbacks experienced in a typical and everyday academic setting. This concept has been linked to social and academic support, academic resilience and persistence, emotions and self-esteem.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Bialystok, E. (2001). *Bilingualism in development: Language, literacy, and cognition*. Cambridge University Press; Bialystok, E. (2021). Cognitive Implications of Bilingualism. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Psychology*; Bialystok, E. (2020). Bilingual effects on cognition in children. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*.

Carlsson, M. (2022). Reimagining Wellbeing in Neoliberal Times: School Wellbeing as an Adjunct to Academic Performance?. In *Wellbeing and Schooling* (pp. 35-48). Springer, Cham.

<sup>84</sup> Jang, E., & Brutt-Griffler, J. (2019). Language as a bridge to higher education: a large-scale empirical study of heritage language proficiency on language minority students' academic success. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 40(4), 322-337.

<sup>85</sup> Agirdag, O. (2014). The long-term effects of bilingualism on children of immigration: student bilingualism and future earnings. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 17(4), 449-464.

<sup>86</sup> Arslan, G., Yildirim, M., & Albertova, S. M. (2022). Development and initial validation of the Subjective Academic Wellbeing Measure: A new tool of youth wellbeing in school. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(1), 3-11; Razmjooe, M. (2022). *Classroom assessment adjustments, academic achievement, academic wellbeing: a mixed methods study of Australian secondary school students with and without disabilities* (Doctoral dissertation, Australian Catholic University);

Juntunen, H. (2019). Students' Subject-Specific Achievement Goal Orientation Profiles, Perceived Cost, and Academic Wellbeing.

<sup>87</sup> Colmar, S., Liem, G. A. D., Connor, J., & Martin, A. J. (2019). Exploring the relationships between academic buoyancy, academic self-concept, and academic performance: a study of mathematics and reading among primary school students. *Educational Psychology*, 39(8), 1068-1089;

Devi, A., Kumar, A., & Lata, S. (2019). Exploring academic buoyancy and academic resilience among school students: A systematic review. *IAHRW International Journal of Social Sciences Review*, 7(5-I), 1078-1084;

Granziera, H., Liem, G. A. D., Chong, W. H., Martin, A. J., Collie, R. J., Bishop, M., & Tynan, L. (2022). The role of teachers' instrumental and emotional support in students' academic buoyancy, engagement, and academic skills: A study of high school and elementary school students in different national contexts. *Learning and Instruction*, 80, 101619;

Hirvonen, R., Putwain, D. W., Määttä, S., Ahonen, T., & Kiuru, N. (2020). The role of academic buoyancy and emotions in students' learning-related expectations and behaviours in primary school. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 90(4), 948-963;

Hoferichter, F., Hirvonen, R., & Kiuru, N. (2021). The development of school well-being in secondary school: High academic buoyancy and supportive class-and school climate as buffers. *Learning and Instruction*, 71, 101377;

Martin, A. J., & Marsh, H. W. (2008). Academic buoyancy: Towards an understanding of students' everyday academic resilience. *Journal of school psychology*, 46(1), 53-83;

Putwain, D. W., Connors, L., Symes, W., & Douglas-Osborn, E. (2012). Is academic buoyancy anything more than adaptive coping? *Anxiety, Stress & Coping*, 25(3), 349-358.

ACTA believes this concept offers a **direct measure** of students' learning wellbeing in school that could be inclusive of the language-mediators crucial to EAL/D learning outlined in the previous sections. We propose that this concept be further investigated with a view to its being applied as a key student wellbeing indicator in the NSRA.

#### **ACTA Recommendation 14**

***The concept of academic wellbeing should be further investigated with a view to its being applied as a key student wellbeing indicator in the NSRA.***

##### **4.1.5 Psychological wellbeing of refugee students**

Since the 1970s, Australia's humanitarian program has brought in significant numbers of refugees in response to global unrest, war and conflict. Humanitarian intakes have included people from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos (1980s), Bosnia (1990s), African countries especially Sudan (2004-2005), Myanmar (2005-2006), Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria (since 2015-2016) and most recently Ukraine. Each year, 13,750 refugees entered Australia (18,750 in 2015-2016) and an additional 12,000 Syrian and Iraqi refugees in 2015-2017. Up to 50 percent of these intakes were school-aged children and adolescents enrolling in Australian schools as newly arrived English language learners.<sup>88</sup>

Most refugees have experienced dislocation, trauma, loss, family separation and limited or disrupted education, all of which can impair their mental health and personal and academic wellbeing.<sup>89</sup> Those who have experienced or witnessed violence or the loss of a parent or family member are at greatest risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).<sup>90</sup> Prevalence of mental health disorders in refugee populations has an average frequency of 18 percent for depression and 36 percent for PTSD in child and adolescent refugees.<sup>91</sup> Students may also experience intergenerational trauma and conflict with parents or carers who themselves are struggling to cope with trauma.<sup>92</sup> At the same time, as part of the process of resettlement in Australia, refugee students strive to make a new life for themselves adapting to the new culture and developing new social relationships and communities of belonging. For visible minorities, in particular, successful resettlement can be impaired by experiences of racism and discrimination.<sup>93</sup>

Environmental factors play a key role in meeting refugee students' primary needs for security and belonging. Social inclusion, a supportive family environment, good mental health of caregivers and

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<sup>88</sup> Ziaian, T., de Anstiss, H., Puvimanasinghe, T., & Miller, E. (2018). Refugee students' psychological wellbeing and experiences in the Australian education system: A mixed-methods investigation. *Australian psychologist*, 53(4), 345-354.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Sullivan, A. L., & Simonson, G. R. (2016). A systematic review of school-based social-emotional interventions for refugee and war-traumatized youth. *Review of Educational Research*, 86(2), 503-530.

<sup>91</sup> Aghajafari, F., Pianorosa, E., Premji, Z., Souri, S., & Dewey, D. (2020). Academic achievement and psychosocial adjustment in child refugees: A systematic review. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 33(6), 908-916  
Turrini, G., Purgato, M., Ballette, F., Nosè, M., Ostuzzi, G., & Barbui, C. (2017). Common mental disorders in asylum seekers and refugees: umbrella review of prevalence and intervention studies. *International journal of mental health systems*, 11(1), 1-14.

<sup>92</sup> Daud, A., Skoglund, E., & Rydelius, P. A. (2005). Children in families of torture victims: Transgenerational transmission of parents' traumatic experiences to their children. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 14(1), 23-32;  
Ziaian, T., de Anstiss, H., Puvimanasinghe, T., & Miller, E. (2018). Refugee students' psychological wellbeing and experiences in the Australian education system: A mixed-methods investigation. *Australian psychologist*, 53(4), 345-354.

<sup>93</sup> Heyeres, M., Perera, N., Udah, H., Attakey, A., Whiteside, M., & Tsey, K. (2021). Interventions Targeting the Wellbeing of Migrant Youths: A Systematic Review of the Literature. *SAGE Open*, 11(3), 21582440211046942.

positive school experiences have been found to enhance resilience and wellbeing in child refugees.<sup>94</sup> Schools are optimal settings for promoting the social relatedness, resilience and wellbeing of ethnically diverse students.<sup>95</sup> Successful school-based interventions include:

- universal whole school approaches, such as developing an inclusive ethos, and music, writing, arts/drama and sports programs<sup>96</sup>
- targeted empowerment and skills training such as study assistance, life skills, effective communication, social-emotional skills, decision-making and critical thinking<sup>97</sup>
- psychotherapeutic interventions by mental health service professionals, such as cognitive behaviour, narrative exposure and play therapies; family, group and individual psycho-social support program, relaxation and mindfulness sessions<sup>98</sup>
- combined multi-tiered approach to trauma-informed care in schools involving, for example, Tier 1: universal trauma training for all school staff, Tier 2: consultation between teachers and school mental health staff, and Tier 3: consultation between school mental health staff and external professionals.<sup>99</sup>

The latter strategy is designed to address teacher concerns and uncertainties about student trauma and trauma-informed classroom practices and referrals, while managing risks for secondary PTSD symptoms among school staff exposed to student trauma.<sup>100</sup>

It is worth noting that most of the above strategies also have general applicability for Indigenous students affected by trauma, and schools and students recovering from disaster.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Betancourt, T. S., & Khan, K. T. (2008). The mental health of children affected by armed conflict: Protective processes and pathways to resilience. *International review of psychiatry*, 20(3), 317-328.

Fazel, M., Reed, R. V., Panter-Brick, C., & Stein, A. (2012). Mental health of displaced and refugee children resettled in high-income countries: risk and protective factors. *The Lancet*, 379(9812), 266-282.

<sup>95</sup> Correa-Velez, I., Gifford, S. M., & Barnett, A. G. (2010). Longing to belong: Social inclusion and wellbeing among youth with refugee backgrounds in the first three years in Melbourne, Australia. *Social science & medicine*, 71(8), 1399-1408;

Spivak, A. L., & Howes, C. (2011). Social and relational factors in early education and prosocial actions of children of diverse ethnocultural communities. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly* (1982-), 1-24;

Khawaja, N. G., Ibrahim, O., & Schweitzer, R. D. (2017). Mental wellbeing of students from refugee and migrant backgrounds: The mediating role of resilience. *School Mental Health*, 9(3), 284-293.

<sup>96</sup> Sellars, M. (2021). Belonging and being: developing inclusive ethos. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 1-24.

Rousseau, C., Benoit, M., Gauthier, M. F., Lacroix, L., Alain, N., Rojas, M. V., Moran, A., & Bourassa, D. (2007). Classroom drama therapy program for immigrant and refugee adolescents: A pilot study. *Clinical child psychology and psychiatry*, 12(3), 451-465; Sullivan and Simonsen (2016); Heyeres et al. (2021);

<sup>97</sup> Heyeres et al. (2021)

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Berger, E. (2019). Multi-tiered approaches to trauma-informed care in schools: A systematic review. *School Mental Health*, 11(4), 650-664.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid; Barrett, N., & Berger, E. (2021). Teachers' experiences and recommendations to support refugee students exposed to trauma. *Social Psychology of Education*, 24(5), 1259-1280.

<sup>101</sup> Miller, J., & Berger, E. (2020). A review of school trauma-informed practice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and youth. *The Educational and Developmental Psychologist*, 37(1), 39-46.

Le Brocque, R., De Young, A., Montague, G., Pocock, S., March, S., Triggell, N., & Kenardy, J. (2017). Schools and natural disaster recovery: The unique and vital role that teachers and education professionals play in ensuring the mental health of students following natural disasters. *Journal of psychologists and counsellors in schools*, 27(1), 1-23;

Nowicki, J. M. (2020). *Disaster Recovery: COVID-19 Pandemic Intensifies Disaster Recovery Challenges for K-12 Schools*. Government Accountability Office Washington DC.

## 4.2 Information Request 4.1: Policy initiatives to improve student wellbeing

The nature and range of threats to student wellbeing outlined in the Report, as well as the specific language and personal wellbeing challenges for Indigenous and migrant and refugee students identified in the previous sections, clearly warrant national policy initiatives aimed at improving students' wellbeing.

In response to sustained refugee enrolments in schools, a range of community-based organisations such as Foundation House, Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN) and STARTTS have developed to provide auxiliary trauma-informed refugee support services and advice to schools.<sup>102</sup> Education departments have used this expertise to develop schools-based professional development in refugee education.<sup>103</sup> These organisations are most effective when working within an ongoing partnership with schools. However, such school-community partnerships are difficult to establish and sustain with overworked and time-poor teaching staff. A central hub linking refugee service community organisations and professional development would greatly assist schools.

Schools play a key role in this area. A plethora and patchwork of initiatives is already underway in many schools and systems. The focus of policy initiatives to improve student wellbeing should therefore be on State and Territory system-based plans to support all schools in implementing and evaluating evidence-based approaches along the lines described above. An additional and explicit focus should be on equity cohorts and vulnerable student groups and in developing productive partnerships with refugee service community organisations. This focus on universal school-based wellbeing strategies would ensure wider and speedier implementation than relying on a pipeline of new graduates receiving wellbeing training in their Initial Teacher Education.

To develop school capability and ensure teachers are not overburdened by new priorities, these plans should include the allocation of additional dedicated staff as wellbeing coordinators. State and Territory system implementation plans should be developed for the period of the NSRA with annual progress reports. At the national level, the role of the Commonwealth Department of Education would be to facilitate identification of best practice student wellbeing strategies and programs through annual national wellbeing conferences and facilitating AERO research support.

### ACTA Recommendation 15

***The role of community organisations in assisting schools to respond to the particular needs of refugees should be recognised in the new NSRA and their services should be promoted nationally through a central online hub.***

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<sup>102</sup> <https://foundationhouse.org.au/> ; <https://myan.org.au/> ; <https://www.startts.org.au/>

<sup>103</sup> For example, the NSW Department of Education's STAR professional development course designed to promote effective teaching and learning strategies to assist staff respond in trauma-aware ways to behavioural issues that may arise for refugee students at: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/professional-learning/priority-professional-learning/s-t-a-r-s--in-schools--supporting-students-from-refugee-backgrou>



## ACTA Recommendation 16

*Student wellbeing initiatives should be included in the NSRA and supported by State and Territory system plans aimed at assisting schools to implement effective student wellbeing strategies and programs, particularly for equity cohorts and vulnerable student groups, including refugees, through:*

- *additional allocation of wellbeing coordinators*
- *development of relevant school-community organisation partnerships*
- *public annual progress reporting*
- *identification of best practice through annual national wellbeing conferences and AERO research support.*

### 4.3 Draft Recommendation 4.1: Incorporating wellbeing in the next NSRA

Including wellbeing in the NSRA requires adoption of student wellbeing as an outcome measure. For this measure to be meaningful, reporting needs to be disaggregated by agreed wellbeing domains and student groups of concern, including equity cohorts. However, reporting involving *de novo* development of a national data set and data collection would impose an unacceptably high administrative burden on schools and systems.

A national organisation already exists with a proven track record in national data collection and reporting on key domains of student wellbeing. Over the last decade, the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) has developed a sophisticated system of national data collection, reporting and organisational support against a national wellbeing framework for children and young people. This system includes:

- a student wellbeing tool developed used to track and support student wellbeing in real time, providing a weekly check-in with students and enabling them to ask for help when needed
- annual Taking the Pulse of Australian Students Data Insights based on student check-in data<sup>104</sup>
- an evidence-based policy framework outlining priorities for investment in six areas which must be properly met for a young person to have wellbeing: i.e. Loved and Safe, Healthy, Material Basics, Learning, Participating, Positive Sense of Identity and Culture<sup>105</sup>
- Report Cards based on the wellbeing framework using the latest available data from a range of sources to describe and illustrate Australia's performance across a number of health and wellbeing indicators. Where possible, the Report Card includes comparisons using similar indicators for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population alongside international OECD data.<sup>106</sup>
- partnerships with local government and community organisations providing guidance and advice in using the above to inform their work and strategic planning.

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<sup>104</sup> [https://www.aracy.org.au/publications-resources/command/download\\_file/id/481/filename/Taking\\_the\\_Pulse\\_of\\_Australian\\_Students\\_in\\_2022\\_Data\\_insights\\_\(ARACY\)\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.aracy.org.au/publications-resources/command/download_file/id/481/filename/Taking_the_Pulse_of_Australian_Students_in_2022_Data_insights_(ARACY)_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>105</sup> <https://www.aracy.org.au/the-nest-in-action/the-nest-overview>

<sup>106</sup> <https://www.aracy.org.au/publications-resources/area?command=record&id=266&cid=21>

ARACY's data infrastructure and expertise provides a robust, ready-made, purpose-built platform for national student wellbeing reporting under the NSRA. Its child-centred wellbeing framework reflects wide research and national consultation in this area and is open to further refinement. The school-centred Australian Student Wellbeing Framework would benefit from refinement and alignment with this framework.<sup>107</sup> ARACY reporting on the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students could be extended to other equity cohorts. Its data collection and reporting processes could be developed to achieve representative sampling by state and territory systems and sectors. Its Taking the Pulse reports would continue to be published annually while its report cards could be published biannually. Its direct weekly student check-in data collection avoids adding to teacher workloads but provides schools with the necessary feedback for student referral and strategy planning and improvement. Establishing a national partnership with ARACY would avoid the conceptual difficulties and implementation risks associated with the Student Data Wellbeing project yet to be endorsed by Education Ministers.

#### **ACTA Recommendation 17**

*The school-centred domains of Australian Student Wellbeing Framework should be reviewed in light of the child-centred domains of the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth's (ARACY) student wellbeing framework to provide a universal, well-aligned, evidence-based student wellbeing framework for use in schools under the NSRA.*

#### **ACTA Recommendation 18**

*To ensure effective national reporting on student wellbeing outcomes under the NSRA, the Commonwealth Government should establish a national partnership with ARACY to provide annual Taking the Pulse reports and biennial Report Cards by State and Territory systems and sectors that include reports on national equity cohorts that are based on an improved alignment between its Nest student wellbeing framework and the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework.*

## **5. Supporting teachers of EAL/D learners**

### **5.1 Draft Finding 5.1: Teacher effectiveness and benefits for students**

#### **5.1.1 In general**

ACTA endorses the finding that 'improving the effectiveness of teaching would generate lifetime benefits for students' and is pleased to see the statistical data supporting this claim.

As we have demonstrated in section 1, the nature and scale of linguistic diversity in Australian schools has major implications for teaching and teacher education in Australia. No primary or secondary graduate teacher can expect to teach in any Australian school or classroom where students with EAL/D learning needs are not present.

The Report's Figure 5.2 (p. 128) provides a useful specification of the drivers of teacher quality and quality teaching. However, unless EAL/D learners are designated a national priority equity cohort, teachers will remain unsupported in teaching these learners at every level and in every dimension of this specification.

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<sup>107</sup> <https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/educators/framework/> Its domains are: inclusion, student voice, partnerships, support and leadership.

The current lack of support – and how the interconnection between professional development, school environment and government policy play out – is comprehensively captured in the following description by a member of an ACTA Consultancy Group who is a teacher educator in a major capital city:

*I am working very closely with an educated, very pro-multilingualism, diversity & inclusion secondary teacher who is doing everything she can to work from a strengths/assets-based approach but:*

- i. *The school structures, policies, timetabling, co-teaching arrangements, and all those external things really are not helping her great ideas to show any signs of positive outcomes*
- ii. *Although the teacher is smart and is learning quickly on the job (third year teaching), she simply does not have the depth of EAL knowledge that not only experienced but also very effective EAL teachers need to help support the diversity of needs that are common in Australian classrooms. Our EAL teachers are very young in general and of course it takes time to learn the ropes but they do not learn much about multilingual language acquisition nor about pedagogy (because they don't have enough foundational, explicit knowledge of the English language themselves) in teacher education courses to be able to become highly effective teachers even with years of experience. There is no ongoing mentorship when they are in schools and we all know the PD sessions offered in schools are not based around knowledge building.*
- iii. *Assessment is a whole other area the teacher this teacher is confused about. The rubrics she is given are meaningless and reductive. She has some power to change things but doesn't know where to start and no one is willing to help or wants to do anything about it as they are all stretched for time and energy.*

*I guess what I am just trying to highlight here is the focus on diversity and the needs of our EAL students should always be the centre but **if the foundational knowledge is not there and the structures do not support, then passion can only take one so far.** Even with her incredibly warm and inclusive attitudes towards all EAL students, once I mention anything about Indigenous students, I can see she is mentally and emotionally too stretched to take in anything I am saying. The incredible hand holding I am doing (outside of my own workload) is helping me to see how difficult this work of diversity, inclusion, decolonisation and all the other critical work we need to do actually is when we have a generation of young teachers, who are passionate, smart, and motivated, but simply lack the foundational language and literacy knowledge and support they need to help expand students' linguistic repertoires, not only for academic success but also for their social development. [our emphasis]*

This personal account is backed up by international and Australian research on the disconnect between linguistic diversity in schools and the support for teachers to engage with it.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> See:

The problems the teacher educator describes are the outcome of a vicious circle involving school-based flexible staffing decisions, inadequate EAL/D teacher standards regulation and diminished EAL/D training incentives and demand.

On the one hand, devolved decision-making and budgets now place decisions on teacher employment solely with school principals. Among the competing demands on their budgets and attention, seeking out teachers with TESOL qualifications is rarely, if ever, a priority. If an EAL/D need is recognised, it is met from within the existing staff. In fact, devolved decision-making has seen increasing redeployment of TESOL-qualified teachers to other areas, while EAL/D support has shifted to reliance on a locally employed casual workforce, often working across multiple school sites and in the pull-out mode endorsed in Chapter 3 of the Report (see section 3.2). Opportunity are non-existent for these teachers to play the leadership roles we describe in section 6 below.

These problems were rife before the pandemic and have been aggravated by it. After years of little workforce planning, education authorities are now forced to fast-track their own teacher supply strategies to address urgent and growing shortages in teaching specialisations.<sup>109</sup> These invariably do not include EAL/D teachers.

No recognition or incentives exist within education systems to equip teachers to respond to EAL/D learning needs, either through specialist provision or within the general teaching force.<sup>110</sup> The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership's (AITSL) *Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures* is silent on EAL/D-related

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Hadjioannou, X., Hutchinson, M. C., & Hockman, M. (2016). Addressing the needs of 21st-century teachers working with culturally and linguistically diverse learners. *CATESOL Journal*, 28(2), 1-29.

He, Y., Journell, W., & Faircloth, J. (2018). Preparing teachers for English learners: Integrating academic language and community service projects. *The Social Studies*, 109(1), 13-26.

Johnson, T., & Wells, L. (2017). English Language Learner Teacher Effectiveness and the Common Core. *Education policy analysis archives*, 25(23).

Kolano, L. Q., Dávila, L. T., Lachance, J., & Coffey, H. (2014). Multicultural Teacher Education: Why Teachers Say It Matters in Preparing Them for English Language Learners. *CATESOL Journal*, 25(1), 41-65.

Villegas, A. M., SaizdeLaMora, K., Martin, A. D., & Mills, T. (2018, April). Preparing future mainstream teachers to teach English language learners: A review of the empirical literature. In *The Educational Forum* (Vol. 82, No. 2, pp. 138-155). Routledge.

<sup>109</sup> <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw-wants-defence-style-recruitment-campaign-to-plug-teacher-shortage-20210817-p58jim.html>;

[Teacher Supply Strategy \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/teacher-supply-strategy);

<https://educationhq.com/news/act-launches-new-taskforce-to-tackle-teacher-shortage-100928/>

COVID-19 has exacerbated teacher shortages due to increased resignations from stress, dissatisfaction and vaccination non-compliance, and declining numbers of ITE applicants. See, for example:

<https://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1008&context=workforce>;

<https://www.theeducatoronline.com/k12/news/teachers-education-crisis-warning-goes-viral/212421>;

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/jul/04/everyones-bailing-australian-teachers-speak-on-stress-and-uncertainty-of-increasing-casual-contracts>

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/jun/30/it-is-unsustainable-guardian-readers-on-the-crisis-of-australian-teacher-shortages>.

Recruiting teachers from overseas is unlikely to solve the problem, because COVID-driven teacher shortages are a world-wide problem. See:

[The teacher shortage is real, large and growing, and worse than we thought: The first report in “The Perfect Storm in the Teacher Labor Market” series | Economic Policy Institute \(ed.gov\)](#);

[America faces a substitute teacher shortage—and disadvantaged schools are hit hardest \(brookings.edu\)](#);

[Teacher shortages - latest news, breaking stories and comment - The Independent](#);

[Covid: Supply teacher shortage could force schools to close - BBC News](#)

<sup>110</sup> A member TESOL association attempted to hold an event this term (term 4, 2022) to inform prospective TESOL teachers on employer requirements and pathways into EAL/D teaching. Teacher employers (State and Catholic jurisdictions) were invited (in writing and with follow-up phone calls) to send representatives. The invitations were declined.

requirements. AITSL's *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* are generic, make vague generic references to culture and language, but do not specify the language-based knowledge and skills required for effective EAL/D teaching by mainstream or specialist EAL/D teachers.<sup>111</sup> *The Capability Framework for Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D Learners* aligns specific standards of EAL/D teaching for Indigenous students from traditional language, new language or Aboriginal English backgrounds with the *Australian Professional Standards*.<sup>112</sup> This Framework is on the AITSL website. However, although both this Framework and the ACTA Elaborations frameworks can be used and promulgated in State/Territory systems, they lie outside the AITSL standards framework and therefore have no status in the national system of teacher regulation.

In short, nothing exists in accreditation requirements or national teacher standards that advises employers, informs teachers or encourages responses to EAL/D needs.<sup>113</sup> The gap between the English learning needs of EAL/D students in schools and a suitably qualified workforce, evident before the pandemic, continues to widen.

The vicious circle is almost completed when lack of demand for EAL/D teachers, the lack of recognition of EAL/D pedagogic knowledge and skills as a contributor to teacher effectiveness, and the lack of incentives to acquire EAL/D knowledge and skills undermine the rationale for teacher education faculties to deliver *any* level of EAL/D pedagogic knowledge and skill, and to maintain the necessary capabilities within their teaching and research staff.

The final link that completes this circle is that EAL/D learners are given no attention in high-level education policy, including re teacher qualifications.

The lived consequence of this vicious circle is well-captured in the teacher frustration and stress just described.

Precisely because EAL/D learners fall outside the scope of the current NSRA, this silence pervades the 2021 report on *Quality Initial Teacher Education* (QITE), which effectively ignored ACTA's detailed submission.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> ACTA representatives participated in the development of the AITSL Standards but to no effect. Subsequently, ACTA developed the EAL/D Standards Elaborations in consultation with AITSL. They are aligned to the AITSL standards and describe EAL/D-informed teaching at different teacher career stages in regard to classroom practice, professional learning goals, pre-service teacher courses and in-service professional learning programs. [These Elaborations have disappeared from the AITSL website. http://www.tesol.org.au/RESOURCES/Australian-Professional-Standards-for-Teachers.](http://www.tesol.org.au/RESOURCES/Australian-Professional-Standards-for-Teachers)

See:

ACTA submission to the QITE Review p.7, 9. <https://tesol.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/ACTA-final-submission-Quality-Initial-Teacher-Education-Review.pdf>,

Liu, Y., Fisher, L., Forbes, K., & Evans, M. (2017). The knowledge base of teaching in linguistically diverse contexts: 10 grounded principles of multilingual classroom pedagogy for EAL. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 17(4), 378-395

Turner, M. (2019). Knowledge about (English) language across the curriculum in EAL and CLIL contexts. In *The Routledge Handbook of Language Education Curriculum Design* (pp. 90-106). Routledge.

<sup>112</sup> [Capability Framework - Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners \(education.qld.gov.au\)](https://www.education.qld.gov.au/teaching/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-eal-d-learners)

<sup>113</sup> Many State authorities do not recognise TESOL as a specialist teaching area. Only one teacher accreditation body makes publicly available specific information on accreditation requirements for EAL/D teaching.

See ACTA QITE Review submission, p.11, at: <https://tesol.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/ACTA-final-submission-Quality-Initial-Teacher-Education-Review.pdf>,

<sup>114</sup> Australian Government, 2022, *Next Steps: Report of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review*, accessed at: <https://www.dese.gov.au/quality-initial-teacher-education-review/resources/next-steps-report-quality-initial-teacher-education-review> <https://tesol.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/ACTA-final-submission-Quality-Initial-Teacher-Education-Review.pdf>

Chapter 5 of the current Interim Report is similarly silent. While the Commission's recommendations are commendable, this silence means that their application to EAL/D learning and teaching will inevitably be ignored.

The Report chapter provides no openings for ACTA to inform the Commission on the anomalies that undermine the preparation, supply and support of teachers with expertise in EAL/D pedagogy. The subject disciplines that are assumed to require attention are Mathematics, Science and English (p. 133).<sup>115</sup>

This universal silence in reports on teaching and teacher education is not neutral. It rests on assumptions that monolingualism is the norm in Australian schools. Until EAL/D learners are designated as a priority equity cohort, the impetus to equip teachers to address EAL/D learning needs will be lacking across the following key drivers affecting quality teaching:

1. initial teacher preparation programs
2. on-going professional development for all classroom teachers and school leaders
3. specialist TESOL qualifications at pre-service and post-graduate levels
4. national standards and accreditation requirements
5. accountability for how the Gonski English language loading is used.

### *5.1.2 Specialist TESOL Teachers*

The core components of the discipline-based knowledge and skills that comprise specialist TESOL expertise are (in varying degrees from basic to advanced):

- the English language system (phonology, morphology, syntax, discourse, rhetoric)
- the psycho- and sociolinguistic/cultural dimensions and processes of speaking, listening, reading and writing in various contexts, including academic English literacy, registers and genres
- the psycho- and sociolinguistic/cultural dimensions and processes involved in the acquisition and development of the mother tongue and additional languages and dialects/varieties, including how literacy develops in one or more languages
- the socio-political dimensions and history of linguistic diversity, multilingualism and multiculturalism in different contexts within and beyond Australia
- the development of intercultural knowledge, competencies, skills and empathy
- research-informed methodology, strategies and resources in EAL/D teaching, assessment and curriculum
- models and strategies for language- and content-integrated teaching, formative and summative assessment of and reporting on EAL/D learning
- evaluating, planning, designing and tailoring curricula, programs and instruction to meet the English learning needs of different EAL/D learners, including adapting course materials,

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<sup>115</sup> We note a similar silence on other important areas in the curriculum, for example, digital literacy.



lesson plans, learning activities, program organisation, and assessment and evaluation methods that respond appropriately to diverse learning, curriculum and cultural contexts.<sup>116</sup>

Teacher education programs providing specialist TESOL expertise are a necessary direct and indirect driver of teacher quality and quality teaching across the whole education system. This expertise supports:

- *teacher education faculties* to include a basic understanding of EAL/D learning in the initial preparation of all teachers (see section 5.2 below)
- *school jurisdictions* in providing on-going professional development for teachers and schools with EAL/D learners
- *the availability of expert TESOL teachers* who can mentor and collaborate with colleagues in other teaching areas (see section 6.3 below)
- *schools in developing programs and environments* that are responsive EAL/D learners and their communities
- *policies and practices* that are informed by evidence-based research
- *professional bodies*, such as ACTA and our member associations, in advocating on behalf of EAL/D learners and supporting teachers through occasional professional development activities.

Currently, there are two pathways for acquiring this expertise:

### 1. Components of pre-service programs

A diminishing number of initial teacher education programs include:

- *for intending primary school teachers* -- one or more TESOL elective units of varying depth and quality
- *for intending post-primary teachers* – TESOL as a teaching “method”, which parallels other subject/content areas in specific contact hours, in assessment of subject-specific content, and in teaching practice requirements.

Over the past few years, many teacher education faculties have reduced, discontinued or reoriented their specialist TESOL offerings for both primary and post-primary intending teachers, replacing them with elective and sometimes mandatory units for all pre-service teachers on generic literacy and cultural diversity (see section 5.2 below). There are now eleven tertiary institutions in Australia that offer elective units for specialist EAL/D teaching in their ITE programs and seven that have mandatory units for all teachers.<sup>117</sup> All programs include teaching practica.

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<sup>116</sup> Since the 1980s, it has been recognised that basic TESOL training for specialist teachers in schools requires 120 hours of post-degree TESOL study in these areas, plus at least 60 hours of supervised EAL/D teaching practice. Schools require qualified TESOL teachers to provide specialised teaching and assessment of EAL/D learners, and to support and advise their colleagues and schools.

Cf. Faltis, C., Arias, M. B., & Ramírez-Marín, F. (2010). Identifying relevant competencies for secondary teachers of English learners. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 33(3), 307-328.

<sup>117</sup> For example, Charles Darwin University discontinued its Graduate Certificate in TESOL course in 2016 after the Northern Territory Department of Education disbanded its EAL/D unit, which sponsored the program. This was the

## 2. Postgraduate certificates, diplomas and degrees

Despite the national move towards two-year postgraduate programs, stand-alone TESOL Graduate Certificate and Diplomas still exist. Graduate Certificates typically cover basic TESOL content as just outlined. Contact hours meet ASQA standards for the designated qualification level. These programs vary greatly in quality, depth of treatment of relevant content, and pre-requisite qualifications for entry.<sup>118</sup> One common cost-saving practice is to incorporate units from lower-level qualifications within a higher-level program. Another is to incorporate non-TESOL content from other programs. Few, if any, now include substantive teaching practica, even for those without prior teaching qualifications.

The persistence of these Certificate and Diploma courses, together with the general enrolment decline in two-year postgraduate programs, confirms the attractiveness of shorter courses for time-poor and resource-constrained teachers. For teachers reengaging in tertiary study, these courses can provide a confidence-building pathway to Masters programs.

However, from the late 1990s onwards, in response to the lack of demand for TESOL-qualified teachers in schools, postgraduate TESOL programs moved to catering for the lucrative market of overseas English language teachers, especially at Masters and research degree level (re local demand: see section 5.5). Content appropriate to the Australian school context has dissipated or disappeared, along with school-based teaching practica. Closed borders resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic have exposed the vulnerability of dependence on international student fees, causing TESOL programs to be disbanded altogether.<sup>119</sup>

In short, the current system of teacher employment, regulation, standards, accreditation and promotion incentives is not fit-for-purpose for Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse schools. Designating EAL/D learners as a priority equity cohort, together with the reporting mechanisms recommended in the Report's Draft Recommendation 3.1, would provide the impetus to develop specific national standards and guidelines that set tertiary teacher education courses on a trajectory to reinstate programs that address EAL/D teaching and learning.

The following recommendations would strengthen teacher regulatory authorities' EAL/D teacher accreditation requirements, reverse the continuing deregulation and disinvestment in the area, and counter the decline in TESOL expertise in Australian schools and teacher education faculties.

### **ACTA Recommendation 19**

***AITSL's accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia should be revised to include specific advice on course content requirements for both specialist and non-specialist preservice EAL/D courses and specialist post graduate TESOL courses.***

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only tertiary course which specifically focused on how teachers can address the EAL/D learning needs of Indigenous students in remote schools.

See also ACTA 2021 submission to the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review, Appendix B at:

<https://tesol.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/ACTA-final-submission-Quality-Initial-Teacher-Education-Review.pdf>

<sup>118</sup> Some require initial teacher education qualifications but others do not.

<sup>119</sup> See ACTA QITE Review submission, pp. 12-13.

For example, La Trobe University closed its Master of Applied Linguistics and Master of TESOL programs due to reduced international student enrolments. Both degrees relied on international student intakes of 75-96 per cent.

## ACTA Recommendation 20

***Reporting and other accountability requirements for use of the Gonski-English language proficiency loading should include reporting on the use of TESOL-qualified teachers to deliver EAL/D programs, including the ASQA level of the TESOL qualification.***

### 5.2 Information Request 5.1: Teaching Performance Assessment

ACTA believes that ‘one shot’ Teaching Performance Assessments will not equip mainstream teachers to respond to EAL/D learners, no matter how rigorously quality standards are applied.<sup>120</sup>

Rather, successful completion of at least one mandatory EAL/D unit by all teachers in training, is needed to provide at least the basic linguistic and sociocultural knowledge and strategies to operate in multilingual classrooms.

Those looking to teach in rural and remote Indigenous communities need additional linguistic, cultural and pedagogic preparation for these environments.

These reforms will not occur unless national standards for both teachers and teacher education programs explicitly specify attention to EAL/D learning needs. In turn, these standards will not change unless these learners are designated a national priority equity group.

Research suggests that mainstream teachers nominate teaching EAL/D learners as a high priority for professional development.<sup>121</sup> Reflecting the vagueness in the AITSL standards, student diversity/inclusivity units, where they exist in ITE programs, are generalised, tokenistic and devoid of EAL/D and curriculum language content.<sup>122</sup> Optional extra professional development can be accessed in teachers’ own time, mostly on-line and backed by few incentives or support.<sup>123</sup> Central EAL/D units in State and Territory education systems have attempted to fill this skill gap, post hoc, by offering mainstream teachers occasional EAL/D professional development sessions and courses.<sup>124</sup> However, in the absence of mandatory EAL/D pre-service training, these courses are effectively doing the ‘heavy lifting’ in a never-ending, catch-up process.

Without robust, generalist, across-the-board ITE preparation in responding to EAL/D learners, teachers will remain ill-equipped to teach these students. Units that provide ITE students a sound

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<sup>120</sup> Leaving aside EAL/D concerns, ACTA endorses strengthening TPAs as outlined in the Report and recommended by the QITE review.

<sup>121</sup> Watkins, M., Lean, G., Noble, G., & Dunn, K. (2013). *Rethinking Multiculturalism Reassessing Multicultural Education*, UWS and NSW DEC: Sydney; Franco-Fuenmayor, Padron, & Waxman, 2015.

<sup>122</sup> Frequently when ITE students are directed to differentiate instruction for different learner cohorts, the main strategies they are offered are giving EAL learners more time and removing or simplifying content. The needs of learners of Standard Australian English as an additional dialect/variety (for example, in the Torres Strait or for Pacifica students) are never addressed.

<sup>123</sup> In some jurisdictions, there are no providers of EAL/D professional learning. In others, central EAL/D education units have attempted to meet the ongoing need for EAL/D professional learning through EAL/D professional development courses for mainstream teachers, such as the South Australian *ESL in the Mainstream* course, the NSW *Teaching English Language Learners* (TELL) course and the inter-jurisdictional *Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D Hub*. With the successive retirement and loss of experienced EAL/D leaders, the sustainability of school based EAL/D professional development is at risk.

<sup>124</sup> The following course packages are in use:

ESL in the Mainstream; (TELL); Tracks to Two-Way learning (Aboriginal Education); Teaching ESL Students in Mainstream classrooms (TESMC); ESL in the Early Years; Culturally Responsive Classrooms.

basis in teaching knowledge and strategies for EAL/D learners should be mandatory.<sup>125</sup> Currently, this requirement is not the norm.

#### **ACTA Recommendation 21**

*To ensure all teachers have the necessary knowledge and skills for effectively teaching EAL/D learners, all teacher candidates should be required to complete at least one mandatory unit on EAL/D teaching and learning in their initial teacher education program.*

#### **ACTA Recommendation 22**

*AITSL's Australian Professional Teaching Standards should encompass supplementary standards frameworks for teaching EAL/D learners, drawing on ACTA's EAL/D Standards Elaborations and the Capability Framework for Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D Learners.*

### **5.3 Information Request 5.2: Induction and Mentoring**

At a systemic level, effective EAL/D teaching, supervision, mentoring and professional learning could be fostered through a network of schools identified as centres of excellence in EAL/D teaching, as part of a system of school-higher education provider partnerships. The evidence base for this network could be fostered by establishing a national Centre for Excellence in ITE whose brief included EAL/D teaching research and evaluation.<sup>126</sup> See also section 5.11 below regarding research.

Teaching practica, induction and mentoring programs would also benefit from implementation of EAL/D-focused classroom observation tools.<sup>127</sup> Intending EAL/D teachers on practicum placements and internships need mentoring by experienced EAL/D teachers. (See also section 5.9).

#### **ACTA Recommendation 23**

*A system of school-higher education provider partnerships, supported by a national Centre for Excellence in ITE that includes a brief for EAL/D teaching research and evaluation, should be established through the next NSRA to promote best practice in teaching, supervision, mentoring and professional learning that includes EAL/D learning and teaching.*

### **5.4 Information Request 5.3: Teacher attrition**

The fundamental source of reward, satisfaction, personal meaning and well-being for teachers is productive teaching and relationships with their students.<sup>128</sup> Teacher disaffection, demoralisation and attrition follow when these ethical values and professional purpose are frustrated or marginalised.

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<sup>125</sup> Hammond, J. (2006). High challenge, high support: Integrating language and content instruction for diverse learners in an English literature classroom. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 5, 4, pp. 269-283.

Foley, Y., Sangster, P., & Anderson, C. (2013). Examining EAL policy and practice in mainstream schools. *Language and Education*, 27(3), 191-206.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid, ps.69-72.

<sup>127</sup> E.g. Baecher, L., Knoll, M., & Patti, J. (2016). Targeted observation of ELL instruction as a tool in the preparation of school leaders. *International Multilingual Research Journal*, 10(3), 201-216.

See quality teaching rounds, p.40, Australian Government, 2022, *Next Steps: Report of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review*.

See also: Hammond, J. (2008). Intellectual challenge and ESL students: Implications of quality teaching initiatives. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 31(2), 128-154.

<sup>128</sup> Spilt, J. L., Koomen, H. M., & Thijs, J. T. (2011). Teacher wellbeing: The importance of teacher-student relationships. *Educational psychology review*, 23(4), 457-477;

Dreer, B. (2021). Teachers' well-being and job satisfaction: The important role of positive emotions in the workplace. *Educational studies*, 1-17;

An observation commonly made by EAL/D teachers is that they would not be in this job if they were looking for a proper salary, conditions or promotion pathways. Although data on EAL/D teachers' conditions is impossible to obtain or verify, it seems clear that those deployed specifically to teach EAL/D learners are mostly casual, on short contracts and/or working part-time. The workforce is also highly feminised.

The particular reasons for choosing to become and remain as an EAL/D teacher are the particular satisfactions gained from working with EAL/D learners. These students are generally highly motivated, demonstrate observable progress in response to quality teaching, are almost always respectful of their teachers (and often very affectionate towards them), have parents and caregivers who are also respectful and grateful, and come with uniquely interesting and challenging perspectives. EAL/D teachers are also stimulated by the disciplinary knowledge and strategies that underpin their pedagogy.

The pool of qualified specialist EAL/D teachers is rapidly shrinking due to the increasing pace of 'baby-boomer' retirements. The failure to require TESOL qualifications to teach EAL/D learners means that those now deployed in this role lack specialist qualifications (see section 5.1.1 above). Support for gaining them is limited (see section 5.1. above). They also entail high costs in fees and personal time.

The main reasons for attrition of those deployed to teach EAL/D learners, irrespective of qualifications, are disillusionment with the lack of systemic, collegial and school leadership support for EAL/D teaching, mandates to teach in ways teachers know to be inappropriate for EAL/D learners (see section 6.1 below), a sense of failure induced by tokenistic provision, inadequate and inappropriate professional development, excessive and inappropriate compliance requirements, professional isolation, and deployment into other teaching areas that do not make good use of their specialist EAL/D knowledge and skills. (See also section 3.1 above re the marginalisation attached to teaching small pull-out groups.)

### **5.5 Draft Finding 5.2 & Recommendation 5.1: Teacher shortages and workforce data**

For the reasons given in section 5.1 above, Draft Finding 5.2 applies in full measure to the supply of TESOL-qualified teachers and EAL/D-informed mainstream teachers.

ACTA endorses Draft Recommendation 5.1. However, that recommendation will have no impact on dealing with TESOL teacher supply unless:

- EAL/D learners are designated as a national priority arising from Australia's migration program and its increasing linguistic diversity, and
- data is collected on:
  - the supply of specialist TESOL teachers, and
  - EAL/D-informed preparation of all mainstream teachers.

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Wentzel, K. R. (2022). Does anybody care? Conceptualization and measurement within the contexts of teacher-student and peer relationships. *Educational Psychology Review*, 1-36.

Li, P. H., Mayer, D., & Malmberg, L. E. (2022). Teacher well-being in the classroom: A micro-longitudinal study. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 115, 103720.



In bringing teacher employers' attention to the ACTA *EAL/D Roadmap for Schools* and specifically the failure to require teachers teaching EAL/D learners to hold TESOL qualifications, ACTA has been routinely told that qualified TESOL teachers are generally impossible to find.

There is no way to verify this claim because data is not collected on TESOL-qualified teachers within systems or graduating from programs. From ACTA's 2016 survey and anecdotally (from what our members tell us about their own and their colleagues' qualifications), ACTA is aware of a decline in TESOL-qualified teachers deployed in schools.<sup>129</sup> If there is a shortage, it is because of the vicious circle described in section 5.1.1 above.

The Australian Teacher Workforce Data Collection (ATWD) is still not fully operational and provides a rear-vision only view of the teacher workforce. It is vague, incomplete and out-of-date about demand in specialist areas such as EAL/D.<sup>130</sup> The ATWD fails to identify key drivers of teacher demand and supply, namely: projected growth in overall student enrolments,<sup>131</sup> including growth in number and proportion of EAL/D learners arising from Australia's migration program and increasingly linguistic diversity;<sup>132</sup> declining numbers of ITE applicants and shrinking supply of teacher graduates;<sup>133</sup> impacts of increased local decision-making and reduced central staffing support under school autonomy policies impairing the quality of teaching,<sup>134</sup> in particular 'out-of-field' subject and specialist EAL/D teachers; increased teacher casualisation and insufficient casual teacher supply.

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<sup>129</sup> One indicator is the declining membership numbers in our State & Territory associations.

<sup>130</sup> The last ACER *Staff in Australia's Schools* survey report on teachers and school leaders was published in 2013. National teacher workforce surveys allude to difficulties in recruiting specialist teaching staff, such as EAL/D teachers, in disadvantaged and hard-to-staff schools. The AITSL *Teaching Futures* background paper merely alludes to ongoing demand for teacher specialisations and impending shortage of specialist teachers across the teacher workforce but provides no data. The 2020 National *Initial Teacher Education Pipeline Data Report* contains two four-year old, unexplained statistical entries on EAL/D subjects completed in 2017 by undergraduate and post graduate secondary ITE students.

<sup>131</sup> Projected growth in student enrolments will greatly increase these teacher shortages with shortages spreading from rural to regional schools and disadvantaged schools being most impacted. See:

[NSW public school teacher shortage, likely to run out five years \(smh.com.au\);](https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/public-school-teacher-shortage-raises-fears-they-will-run-out-of-teachers-20211003-p58wtq.html)

[https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/public-school-teacher-shortage-raises-fears-they-will-run-out-of-teachers-20211003-p58wtq.html;](https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/public-school-teacher-shortage-raises-fears-they-will-run-out-of-teachers-20211003-p58wtq.html)

[https://www.theeducatoronline.com/k12/news/whats-being-done-to-address-teacher-shortages/278840;](https://www.theeducatoronline.com/k12/news/whats-being-done-to-address-teacher-shortages/278840)

[NSW schools battle to fill jobs as teacher supply dwindles \(smh.com.au\);](https://www.smh.com.au/education/profession-in-crisis-teacher-shortage-predicted-in-next-four-years-20190417-p51f2q.html)

[https://news.nswtf.org.au/blog/media-release/2021/09/teacher-shortage-hitting-schools-across-sydney-and-regional-nsw;](https://news.nswtf.org.au/blog/media-release/2021/09/teacher-shortage-hitting-schools-across-sydney-and-regional-nsw)

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-06-15/school-principals-dont-have-enough-maths-science-teachers/100214738>

[https://www.smh.com.au/education/profession-in-crisis-teacher-shortage-predicted-in-next-four-years-20190417-p51f2q.html;](https://www.smh.com.au/education/profession-in-crisis-teacher-shortage-predicted-in-next-four-years-20190417-p51f2q.html)

[https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/number-crunchers-find-poorest-schools-have-the-poorest-teachers-20200205-p53y2s.html;](https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/number-crunchers-find-poorest-schools-have-the-poorest-teachers-20200205-p53y2s.html)

[The areas in which school enrolments are expected to double \(smh.com.au\);](https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/one-in-six-teachers-working-outside-their-area-of-expertise-documents-reveal-20211007-p58y28.html)

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/one-in-six-teachers-working-outside-their-area-of-expertise-documents-reveal-20211007-p58y28.html>

<sup>132</sup> [https://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-02-07/teachers-warn-of-looming-crisis-over-esl-courses-in-nsw-schools/6077766;](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-02-07/teachers-warn-of-looming-crisis-over-esl-courses-in-nsw-schools/6077766)

ACTA submission to Review of the Melbourne Declaration, p. 4. at: [https://tesol.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/625\\_ACTA\\_submission\\_Review\\_of\\_Melbourne\\_Declaration\\_14\\_June\\_2019.pdf](https://tesol.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/625_ACTA_submission_Review_of_Melbourne_Declaration_14_June_2019.pdf)

<sup>133</sup> [https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/nsw-schools-struggle-to-find-teachers-as-supply-collapses-20210621-p582w5.html;](https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/nsw-schools-struggle-to-find-teachers-as-supply-collapses-20210621-p582w5.html)

[https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/public-school-teacher-shortage-raises-fears-they-will-run-out-of-teachers-20211003-p58wtq.html;](https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/public-school-teacher-shortage-raises-fears-they-will-run-out-of-teachers-20211003-p58wtq.html)

<https://news.nswtf.org.au/blog/media-release/2021/11/growing-teacher-shortages-and-nsw-could-miss-out-thousandteachers#:~:text=The%20Department%20of%20Education%20warned%20last%20year%20NSW%20could%20run,teachers%20in%20the%20next%20decade>

<sup>134</sup> Loss of centralised staffing support under school autonomy policies has made it difficult for schools to fill staff vacancies with suitably qualified teachers and has resulted in growing numbers of teachers teaching outside their area of expertise.



The gap between the English learning needs of EAL/D students and a suitably qualified workforce, evident before the pandemic, continues to widen.<sup>135</sup>

In accord with the QITE report's Recommendation 17 to develop a national approach to teacher supply and demand, its proposed model should include particular reference to (i) data gaps in the supply, demand, retention and attrition of specialist EAL/D teachers, (ii) regular public reporting and projections based on EAL/D learner population data, system staffing data and resourcing plans, specialist EAL/D teaching programs, and data on specialist EAL/D graduates (ITE and postgraduate), and (iii) EAL/D teacher recruitment and retention strategies.<sup>136</sup> This action would deliver on NPI commitment B(i)d) to 'implement a national teacher workforce strategy to respond to teacher workforce needs of the future, and support decision making of teacher employers and ITE providers.'<sup>137</sup>

#### ACTA Recommendation 24

*The next NSRA should develop a national model of teacher supply and demand that includes EAL/D teachers, specifically with reference to:*

- *data gaps in the supply, demand, retention, and attrition of TESOL-qualified teachers*
- *regular public reporting and projections based on:*
  - *EAL/D learner population data arising from Australia's migration program and its increasing linguistic diversity*
  - *system staffing data and resourcing plans*
- *provision for specialist EAL/D teaching*
- *TESOL-qualified graduates (ITE and postgraduate)*
- *EAL/D teacher recruitment and retention strategies.*

#### 5.6 The lack of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers

ACTA directs the Commission's attention to the lack of teachers from rural and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

A teacher member of an ACTA Consultancy Group described his lived experience as follows:

*First Nations teachers are over-burdened when they are the only First Nations person on staff and are automatically allocated to lead the Indigenous program in a school, even, as in my case, when employed as a relief teacher and/or from a completely other locality. Local knowledge, cultural competence and cultural nuance in local contexts are extremely important. Often the pressure is too great and is a major cause of stress and teacher resignations.*

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<sup>135</sup> This growing inequality in staffing between schools is characteristic of Australia, which, unlike most OECD countries, does not allocate the most qualified and experienced teachers to its most disadvantaged schools. See: AARE blog, The Government must know how to fix the teacher shortage. So why won't it act now? at: <https://www.aare.edu.au/blog/?p=9732>;

<sup>136</sup> Australian Government, 2022, *Next Steps: Report of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review*, Recommendation 17, p.92, <https://www.dese.gov.au/quality-initial-teacher-education-review/resources/next-steps-report-quality-initial-teacher-education-review>

<sup>137</sup> <https://www.dese.gov.au/quality-schools-package/resources/national-school-reform-agreement> p.23

The status and availability of qualified Aboriginal staff in remote schools has been significantly undermined by the loss of targeted and appropriate training and qualification opportunities. Until 2012 Batchelor Institute offered an undergraduate teacher education program that was specifically designed to provide recognised qualifications for Aboriginal teachers to teach in remote schools. 75% of Batchelor's teacher education graduates worked in bilingual schools, mostly in the Northern Territory. In the late 80s, these schools provided first language instruction to over 50% of remote NT Indigenous students.<sup>138</sup> In 2012, that program was merged with the mainstream Bachelor of Education program at Charles Darwin University (CDU). The lack of English language support for remote students and the inappropriate content contained in CDU's mainstream program, including a lack of EAL/D and bilingual pedagogy content, caused students transferring from Batchelor to CDU to realise that the course was not appropriate and consequently the majority of these students ceased their studies.<sup>139</sup>

The progressive defunding of bilingual programs from the late 1990s onwards has also undermined the perceived need for qualified Aboriginal teachers and, correspondingly, a reduction in positions.

Targeted provision for training and qualifying Aboriginal teachers in the Northern Territory is now confined to the pilot Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education (RATE) Program, which has been offered to Aboriginal Assistant Teachers (ATs) in four remote schools, who want to become fully qualified teachers.<sup>140</sup> The initial iteration of the program in 2020 was unsatisfactory because:

- fly-in staffing was inflexible in regard to timetabling and student availability
- the content assumed no prior experience in teaching, remote schools or cultural knowledge
- the content did not include teaching EAL/D or bilingual pedagogy
- support was limited in supporting the Assistant Teachers to develop academic English skills.

A second iteration in 2021 adopted an initial recommendation that the co-ordinator located on each community take on more of the teaching role. However, apart from this, no other changes were made, and the curriculum remains largely as irrelevant as it was in 2020.

Because of the mismatch of the course content, the level of academic skills required and the relevance to the local teaching conditions, many of the students who had enrolled in the 'trial' period (Feb – July 2021) were counselled out of the RATE program and were encouraged to enrol into the VET Certificate program at Batchelor Institute.

In 2012, Batchelor Institute lost its Higher Education undergraduate accreditation. It now offers Certificates III, IV for Assistant Teachers in the Vocational Education and Training Sector and a

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<sup>138</sup> Lee, P. Fasoli, L. Ford, L. Stephenson, P. & McInerney, D. 2014, Indigenous Kids and Schooling in the Northern Territory: An introductory overview and brief history of Aboriginal Education in the Northern Territory, Batchelor Press Retrieved from: <http://www.batchelorpress.com/docs/open/iks/indigenous-kids-schooling-nt.pdf>

<sup>139</sup> The comment below came in response to a draft of this section:  
*Simply using the mainstream teacher ed. course will not work. It's important for faculty working with these teachers to have the experience of working in remote schools, otherwise they hear but do not understand why the current Bachelor of Education course is NOT SUITABLE. The content has been designed for mainstream classrooms and disregards the strengths and learning needs of Aboriginal teachers.... I am thoroughly depressed about existing pathways.*

<sup>140</sup> The ATs are enrolled in an Undergraduate Certificate which consists of four units from the CDU Bachelor of Education course:  
[Undergraduate Certificate Remote Educators \(NRED01 - 2021\) | Charles Darwin University \(cdu.edu.au\)](#). See also [Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education \(RATE\) Pilot Program - Department of Education](#)

Diploma of Educational Support. These awards are governed by ASQA requirements. While individual trainers make adjustments based on their professional experience, these courses are largely unsuitable for Aboriginal Assistant Teachers from remote communities because they include only limited content on bilingual and EAL/D pedagogy, and do not provide explicit English language support. Without relevant content and support, the Certificates do not offer these Assistant Teachers a genuine pathway into teaching qualifications.

In the NT, the number of *permanent* Assistant Teacher positions has been reduced. Assistant Teachers are now increasingly frequently employed as casuals by local school councils. They have relatively few entitlements and their employment is insecure. With budget cuts to remote schools, many casual Indigenous school staff have lost positions (see section 3.5).

It is important to note that Assistant Aboriginal Teachers are not teachers' aides or education support workers. In remote schools where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are used, these teachers have unique and specific teaching responsibilities. Both Aboriginal teachers and Assistant Teachers are crucial in mediating classroom learning and wider school experiences for students with minimal/no English because they are local, can explain things in the language the children speak and can mediate and explain the Western cultural practices of the classroom. Reduced Aboriginal staffing has limited schools' ability to address these students' needs. The loss of Indigenous staffing positions in schools has also deprived adults in remote communities of a pathway and incentive to further study and to develop their literacy skills.<sup>141</sup> This loss also sends a message to communities that their languages and culture lack value.

#### **ACTA Recommendation 25**

*The next NSRA should include targets for training and appointing appropriately trained and qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Assistant Teachers and Teachers, including in remote schools.*

#### **ACTA Recommendation 26**

*The next NSRA should require jurisdictions to maintain an annual public record of the total number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers and Assistant Teachers employed in their schools.*

#### **ACTA Recommendation 27**

*As part of the next NSRA, the Commonwealth should offer to support jurisdictions in planning, resourcing, improving, upgrading and evaluating one or more purpose-designed Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education programs that build on the experience of the Northern Territory RATE trial (which ran from Feb-June 2021 in 4 communities). The Program(s) should:*

- *contain appropriate content for experienced Assistant Teachers in remote schools, which respects and builds on their knowledge as speakers of Aboriginal languages and their status as cultural custodians in their communities*
- *offer qualifications at levels that are directly tied to jurisdictions' salary scales*
- *ensure adequate support for enrolled Assistant Teachers to develop their academic English skills*

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<sup>141</sup> See also [Submission 52 - Indigenous Education Consultative Meeting \(IECM\) - National School Reform Agreement - Commissioned study \(pc.gov.au\)](#) p. 12

- *be delivered by teacher educators who:*
  - *are employed onsite in the remote schools participating in the program*
  - *qualified, experienced and competent in EAL/D and bilingual pedagogy in remote contexts*
- *be progressively extended to other communities with relatively large populations; these communities could be designated as “hubs” for more comprehensive coverage*
- *include the following stakeholders in developing and accrediting the Program(s):*
  - *employing authorities*
  - *training providers (e.g. Charles Darwin University and Batchelor Institute)*
  - *accreditation authorities (the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership/AITSL, the Australian Qualifications Authority/ASQA, and State/Territory Teachers Registration Boards).*

### 5.7 Draft finding 5.3 and Draft Recommendation 5.2: Teacher workloads

Draft Recommendation 5.2 does not identify the crucial workload issues faced by EAL/D teachers.

As already stated, the source of EAL/D teachers’ motivation to work hard is their productive pedagogic relationships with students. EAL/D teachers’ complaints about workloads stem partly from low-value non-teaching tasks and assignment to ‘out-of-field’ teaching. However, so-called ‘high value’ tasks can themselves create a sense of overwork when they stem from teaching and assessment requirements that EAL/D teachers believe to be inappropriate and pedagogically useless, or when the results of their work are disregarded.<sup>142</sup> These problems will not be solved by the review proposed in Draft recommendation 5.2. The solution lies in supporting teachers’ work through productive EAL/D teaching and assessment resources.<sup>143</sup>

The Grattan Institute’s report recommendations for a whole-school rather than an individual approach to curriculum planning, supported by a suite of comprehensive, high-quality resources and the development of school curriculum planning and development expertise, has potential to reduce teacher time and increase quality on lesson planning/preparation, conditional on it being EAL/D informed.<sup>144</sup> However, this recommendation should not be conflated with suggestions for developing (semi-)standardised national lesson plans. Creating context-specific, needs-based lessons and differentiated learning materials is a fundamental part of a teacher’s role. Standardised lessons plans can only further disempower and de-professionalise teachers and disengage their students.

As part of their role in supporting colleagues across the curriculum, EAL/D teachers can play a valuable role in using their expertise to assist in designing, selecting, adapting and scaffolding lessons,

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<sup>142</sup> See, for example, the most recent EAL/D assessment frameworks against which NT teachers are mandated to report: [English as an additional language/dialect \(EAL/D\) | Department of Education](#). For Transition to Year 2 EAL/D learners, there are **at least 560 criteria** teachers can consider in relation to *each* student in their class. For a class of 18 students, a teacher could, in theory, make **8,400 separate judgements**. The frameworks increase in complexity for higher Year levels. Reports using this absurdly over-complex framework are lodged in the NT data base but only NAPLAN results are reported, at least in the public domain.

<sup>143</sup> Davison, Chris (2019). Using assessment to enhance learning in English Language Education. In Gao, X. (eds). *Second Handbook of English Language Teaching*. Springer International Handbooks of Education. Springer, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02899-2\\_21](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02899-2_21)

<sup>144</sup> Hunter, Haywood & Parkinson (2022) *Ending the lesson lottery: How to improve curriculum planning in schools*, <https://grattan.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Ending-the-lesson-lottery-Grattan-Report.pdf>

tasks and materials for schools and classes with EAL/D learners. This role could be formally recognised by including EAL/D teachers in a whole school curriculum planning and development strategy based on the Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher roles outlined in ACTA recommendation 28 below.

### **ACTA Recommendation 28**

*To assist in reducing teacher workload, the next NRSA should develop a new National Policy Initiative that encourages a whole-school approach to curriculum planning and development, supported by a suite of comprehensive, high-quality support materials and development of school curriculum expertise, including EAL/D expertise, tied to Highly Accomplished and Lead teacher roles.*

### **5.8 Information request 5.4: Teaching assistants and support staff**

ACTA has no direct information on the use of teaching assistants and support staff in schools. Extrapolating from what we know about the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), bi/multilingual lingual teaching assistants play an invaluable role in migrant and refugee beginner classes in supporting learners and translating where appropriate. They also assist in preparation of written information.

In schools in high migrant density areas, bi/multilingual reception desk staff are crucial. Bi/multilingual reception support staff can clearly contribute to verbal and written communication with parents, carers and the wider community.

Clearly, school budget allocations should make it possible for schools to employ teaching assistants in ways that do not impinge on the employment of qualified teachers. In this connection and in regard to Aboriginal Assistant Teachers (who are **not** teaching assistants), please see section 5.6 above.

Rather than national collaboration, it would seem to us that support for localised recruitment and training of teaching assistants would be appropriate. Possibly assistance could be given to jurisdictions to share training resources.

### **5.9 Draft recommendation 5.3: Encouraging highly effective teachers**

ACTA welcomes this recommendation.

However, as we have repeatedly observed, the recommendation will have minimal impact on teacher effectiveness in meeting EAL/D learning needs if they are ignored in local communities of practice, along with the training, deployment and processes for recognising Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers.

Given the current employment status of EAL/D teachers as described in section 5.4 above, proposals regarding promotion pathways are close to risible. It is difficult to gain permanency – much less a Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher role – if a teacher is committed to teaching EAL/D learners.

The ACTA EAL/D Elaborations should apply to the Highly Accomplished and Lead stages of AITSL's national teaching standards. EAL/D Elaborations should also be developed for AITSL's *Australian Professional Standard for Principals and Leadership Profiles*. These strategies would support development of an EAL/D career pathway that fosters the high-level, evidence-based EAL/D teaching essential in responding to the linguistic diversity of Australia's schools.



Rather than a marginalised EAL/D teaching force, schools with significant enrolments of EAL/D learners require the specialised expertise of Highly Accomplished teachers with post-graduate qualifications in TESOL or Applied Linguistics. Currently there is no system of support or incentives in place to support gaining these expensive qualifications. See also section 5.1 re the winding down of TESOL qualifications at all levels, and also section 5.11 below re improving understandings of classrooms.

### **5.10 Information Request 5.5: Pathways into EAL/D teaching**

A common pathway into EAL/D teaching is via a post-graduate Certificate, Diploma and Masters degree (see above section 5.1.2). This route is often taken by both qualified generalist teachers who have been given EAL/D responsibilities in schools, and also frequently by people returning from travelling and teaching English overseas, often with minimal/no teaching qualifications of any kind. Both groups are universally highly motivated by their experiences with EAL/D learners, have excellent experience working interculturally, and realise the need for developing their knowledge and pedagogic skills.

For those holding recognised generalist teaching qualifications, the main obstacle is the cost of obtaining further specialist TESOL qualifications.

Those without teaching qualifications often hold TESOL qualifications gained from overseas bodies. Some are high quality, for example, the extensive suite of Cambridge TESOL qualifications.<sup>145</sup>

The situation regarding the employment of EAL/D teachers in Australian schools offers no incentives to these prospective EAL/D teachers to undertake further expensive qualifications – in fact, only barriers. Specific incentives to attract often high quality and highly motivated TESOL teachers include scholarships or fee waivers for both the groups above. For those holding quality TESOL awards but lacking teaching qualifications recognised in Australia, teacher education programs could be encouraged to consider prior learning towards gaining a recognised generalist teaching degree.

### **ACTA Recommendation 29**

*The next NSRA should address employment and career pathways for EAL/D teachers by explicitly specifying EAL/D as a target area for improving teacher effectiveness in the processes by which teachers:*

- *are appointed to permanent positions with responsibilities for teaching EAL/D*
- *become Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers, including teaching EAL/D*
- *contribute to localised communities of practice.*

### **5.11 Information request 5.6: Understanding classrooms**

Improving our understanding of what is being taught in classrooms is currently impeded across all disciplinary areas, including EAL/D, by excessive bureaucratic restrictions blocking classroom-based research, and punitive legal restrictions on government employees, including teachers, revealing information from workplaces.

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<sup>145</sup> [Teaching qualifications and courses | Cambridge English](#). The training provided in these programs is vastly superior to some offered in Australian teacher education programs.



The development of these requirements and barriers is understandable to some extent. They have followed from teachers' and schools' unhappy experiences with some researchers' disregard, disruptiveness and even disrespect in the sites they research.

However, it would appear that the central authorities in school systems are generally unsupportive, if not antagonistic, to classroom-based research, especially from independent researchers.

ACTA offers a national award for outstanding doctoral theses on language(s) education and assessment in schools.<sup>146</sup> There have been years when *no* theses have been proposed for this award, reflecting the lack of research into language learning in schools, including EAL/D. ACTA is in process of developing a research grant program. One of our member associations (VicTESOL) also offers an annual research grant.<sup>147</sup> The Applied Linguistics Association of Australia (ALAA) offers a range of research awards, as does the Association for Language Testing and Assessment of Australia and New Zealand (ALTANZ).<sup>148</sup> The funds supporting these awards come from members and other donations.

Few, if any, of these awards have gone to research done in Australian schools because of the difficulty in accessing them.

Protocols for undertaking research in Australian classrooms require review to strike a balance between the smooth working of schools and classrooms and encouraging worthwhile classroom-based research.

One way of mitigating disruption from external researchers is for teachers to conduct their own classroom-based action-research within and outside of gaining formal qualifications. As already recommended, fee waivers and scholarships would stimulate such research. The continuation of EAL/D specific research in Australian classrooms is under extreme pressure for the reasons outlined in section 5.1.

The most cost-effective and efficient way that Commonwealth, States and Territories could foster classroom-based research would be to offer professional associations financial support to offer awards for research within and beyond formal doctoral studies.

In regard to priority equity groups, including EAL/D learners, the Commonwealth could encourage the Australian Research Council to include classroom research as a target area.

### **ACTA Recommendation 30**

***Classroom-based research, including research into EAL/D teaching and learning, should be encouraged and supported as an initiative in the next NSRA through:***

- ***targeted research scholarships***
- ***national priority equity group focused funding from the Australian Research Council***
- ***research grants to professional associations.***

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<sup>146</sup> For details re the Penny McKay Memorial Award, go to: [Who we are – Australian Council of TESOL Associations](#)

<sup>147</sup> [VicTESOL Research Grant 2022 – VicTESOL](#)

<sup>148</sup> [ALAA - The Applied Linguistics Association of Australia](#)  
[ALTAANZ Best Student Paper Award - ALTAANZ](#)

## 6. Fostering EAL/D informed school leadership

### 6.1 Draft finding 6/1: Impact of leadership on EAL/D learning in schools

The Report's draft finding 6.1 that improving school leadership can have large impacts on students' learning is especially true for EAL/D learners in schools. The nature and distribution of EAL/D learners across the years of schooling requires both targeted and whole school approaches to organising EAL/D teaching support within a school. EAL/D learners access specialist instruction through different modes of program delivery organised by EAL/D teachers with the collaboration and support of school executive staff. EAL/D informed school leadership is therefore a key determinant in the effective delivery of EAL/D programs in schools and an essential element in any systemic approach to improve the equity and quality of education for these students.

Collaborative decision-making around effective EAL/D program delivery in schools crucially depends on leadership understandings about second language learning and teaching, and explains the fragility of school EAL/D programs when such understanding is wanting.

School autonomy and the flexible resource management policies implemented in State and Territory education systems in the last decade have given principals and executive teams increased discretion over the use of resources allocated to their school, including previously earmarked EAL/D funding and currently the Gonski English language proficiency loading.<sup>149</sup> Little or no direction now comes from State/Territory or regional offices, to the point where – at least in some jurisdictions – questions can no longer be asked in regard to EAL/D provision or staffing.<sup>150</sup>

In this context, ACTA's 2016 national EAL/D survey revealed widespread adverse impacts on EAL/D staffing and provision caused by school leaders' lack of understanding of EAL/D students' learning needs when making decisions about school programs.<sup>151</sup> The general impact on EAL/D provision in relation to components of Box 6.1 (Report p. 162) and its following text are captured in the following comment from a teacher in the ACTA 2016 national survey:

*Unfortunately, with decentralised funding, EAL funding goes into global school budgets and is too frequently spent on other areas. EAL students are not receiving*

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<sup>149</sup> For an in-depth examination of the effect on EAL/D provision, see Sue Creagh, Anna Hogan, Bob Lingard & Taehee Choi (2022): The 'everywhere and nowhere' English language policy in Queensland government schools: a license for commercialisation, *Journal of Education Policy*, DOI: 10.1080/02680939.2022.2037721: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2022.2037721>

<sup>150</sup> We have this advice directly from literacy consultants employed in central offices in at least 3 jurisdictions.

<sup>151</sup> The 606 respondents to the survey were obtained via State/Territory TESOL associations. 82% taught in government schools; the breakdown according to State/Territory was Victoria 24.6%, ACT 21% 41, New South Wales 14.9%, Queensland 12.8%, Northern Territory 9.2%, South Australia 6.7%, Tasmania 2.6%. 87% of respondents were EAL/D qualified; 69% were teaching mainstream classes with 49% teaching New Arrivals. The latter figures are concerning in that they indicate that new arrivals were then and increasingly now placed directly into mainstream classes. The following comments from respondents exemplify the common lack of understanding:

*Many leaders have very little understanding of EAL. They often assume that programs designed for students with learning difficulties are appropriate for EAL students. The need for mainstream teacher professional learning around strategies and differentiation is not recognised and supported.*

Qualified EAL/D Teacher teaching new arrivals in a Victorian government school.

*There is a fundamental lack of understanding at all levels of leadership regarding the needs of English language learners. Too often they are conflated with learning difficulties and little regard is paid to students' considerable bilingual skills. Nor is there any interest in learning about how long it takes to become properly fluent in a language, including academic discourse. Once students have ceased to be new arrivals they are treated exactly the same as native English speakers, with no recognition of cultural difference.* EAL/D Consultant, NSW government schools.

*specialised assistance. Even if the money was spent on professional learning about EAL for mainstream teachers it would be very beneficial. When questioned about where funding has gone, principals will often respond by saying the funding is supporting general literacy programs or reducing overall class sizes. This does not address the specific needs of EAL students. Too frequently EAL students receive no support and mainstream teachers are left floundering and frustrated.*

Qualified EAL/D teacher of New Arrival students, Government school, Vic.

The Box below provides a range of 2016 ACTA survey comments about the impact of leadership decision making in key areas that crucially affect EAL/D provision.

### **Education leadership decision-making affecting EAL/D provision**

#### **1. System policy and support**

*There is no EALD team in our state really supporting schools as per the past. There are no consultants in district office or ESL visiting teacher. There is no real voice in the Department anymore for EALD.*

*Our EAL support team in central office is now included in literacy. There is nobody to call or get support from except peer teachers whose numbers are decreasing.*

*Since we no longer have regional consultants we do what we can for ourselves.*

*There is an increasing isolation felt by EAL/D teachers, especially in other schools around us. We live in a vacuum now.*

#### **2. Use of EAL/D funding**

*Funds have not been used for EAL/D students and have been allocated for other purposes in the school to the detriment of EAL/D learners and teachers.*

*All funding for our EAL/D students have been put into the school general budget. We don't have a separate budget for EAL/D students. Our Principal makes all the decisions regarding what our EAL/D students need and who our EAL/D teachers can teach.*

*The funding is controlled by a principal who doesn't understand the value of EALD teaching and supports large class sizes with little assistant time.*

*Funding fluctuates so what can be delivered fluctuates from year to year. This presents challenges for delivery longer term programs. I have been in my current position for nearly 10 years. The program started with 7 students and is now over 120 but it is still funded year to year with no long-term planning occurring.*

*Funds have not been used for EAL/D students and have been allocated for other purposes in the school to the detriment of EAL/D learners and teachers.*

*EAL/D funding is being pooled with Special Education funding so Special Education teachers are asked to take on the role - with no training.*

*The program has essentially been de-valued. Programs are easily collapsed and EALD staff is used to cover staff training and programming!*

*There is no requirement to address the EAL/D cohort for accountability purposes...no school reviews processes which look specifically at EALD groups.*

#### **3. Recruitment and employment of EAL/D teachers**

*Dedicated classroom teacher position (part time) for EAL/D has been absorbed into general school staffing points.*

*EAL/D teaching specialist positions are being reduced to part-time or replaced by generalist teachers.*

*There's a tendency in schools to employ staff who suit their timetabling arrangements rather than staff who have knowledge and experience in EAL/D support.*

*EALD support is quickly transferred to a literacy position with no specialised support for second language learners.*

*No respect is given to EAL qualification in staff allotments.*

*Fewer qualified EAL teachers and questionable allocation of EAL staff responsibilities.*

*EAL/D students across the school no longer have any support because the only fully qualified EAL/D specialist teacher is now a classroom teacher. The only children who have support are the ones in the classroom with the EAL/D teacher.*

*Lack of knowledge of how the new funding model works impacts on EAL/D service provision and this led to many schools not retaining the services of the EAL/D specialist.*

*Leadership team has decided not use EAL/D position to support EAL/D students but to instead use position to give teachers their non-contact mandated planning time.*

*TESOL professional development has significantly decreased and teachers are no longer required to have TESOL qualifications to teach in TESOL contexts.*

*My school had 4 teachers over the whole school years ago and now we have one in the senior school, a 0.2 FTE person to mentor fee paying students and literacy support (0.4 - 0.6 FTE) in the middle school.*

#### **4. EAL/D program provision**

*The funds are not being used on EALD students and no program exists now.*

*EAL programs have vanished and dedicated EAL teacher support no longer offered to EAL students.*

*Leadership have limited knowledge of EAL/D teaching and learning and how this impacts on the EAL/D students accessing the Australian Curriculum.*

*In a school with over 50% EALD students with literacy issues there is no formal support.*

*Over 10% of school population is EAL and they receive barely any support.*

*Defunding and downsizing mean less EAL/D support, especially in Aboriginal EAL/D.*

*Needs are not being met and students are failing.*

*Students in junior school do not have access to EALD trained teachers and sit quietly in the classroom. Their level of language has been impaired by decentralised school funding and ESES system.*

*Students are left to "get on with it" and learn without adequate resources.*

*The ESL students are becoming or have become invisible; poor results are easily justified because "well they are ESL".... back to the 1960's.*

In consequence:

- actual EAL/D provision is highly variable, vulnerable and unstable
- school leaderships lack capacity to make sound decisions<sup>152</sup>
- school leaders are vulnerable to capture by skilled marketers of unsuitable commercially produced programs and resources.

The last dot point is a growing concern.<sup>153</sup>

<sup>152</sup> The 2016 ACTA survey included the following question: *Does your site leadership team have the requisite understanding of EAL/D matters to administer funds/make decisions on behalf of these students?* 28% answered 'yes', 50% answered 'partly' and 23% answered 'no'. Based on anecdotal evidence, we believe the situation has worsened since 2016.

<sup>153</sup> See Sue Creagh, Anna Hogan, Bob Lingard & Taehee Choi (2022): The 'everywhere and nowhere' English language policy in Queensland government schools: a license for commercialisation, *Journal of Education Policy*, DOI: 10.1080/02680939.2022.2037721, p.13. The effect of commercialism in this field is now the subject of a four-nation study by this research team at University of Queensland. To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2022.2037721>

Respondents to the 2016 ACTA survey listed the following areas that had either replaced or were competing with EAL/D provision for resources and program space:

- Commercial phonics-based education packages such as Jolly Phonics<sup>154</sup>
- Commercial literacy programs such as Accelerated Literacy, Direct Instruction and MultiLit
- Other literacy programs such as Reading Recovery, Synthetic phonics
- Remedial English classes
- Speech Pathology intervention
- Disability services
- Sport
- Gardening: The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden program
- School carnivals and performances

Since the publication in 2012 of the ACER National School Improvement Tool, many jurisdictions have developed their own school improvement tools for schools to use in evaluating school effectiveness and developing improvement plans. These tools are invariably generic and do not capture what is necessary for implementing and developing effective whole school EAL/D provision. Generic national and system-based school improvement tools need to include explicit EAL/D focused planning and evaluation resources.<sup>155</sup>

The Report specifies key elements in fostering the conditions for learning in a school (p. 163). Within this framework, school EAL/D leadership has a well-research based role in:

- promoting effective pedagogy and collective staff responsibility for progress towards shared goals
- ongoing collection and formative use of appropriate data to monitor student engagement and achievement for instructional improvement and whole school planning
- developing strong professional development support programs for all staff
- assisting parent/carer and family participation and building school-community relationships.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> From a respondent to the 2016 ACTA survey:

*Jolly Phonics and other decontextualised teaching practices are unsuitable, as are reading strategies that ask EALD students to provide a word or sound that is not in their vocabulary/knowledge at their stage of acquisition. Qualified EAL/D teacher in the ACT government New Arrivals program.*

<sup>155</sup> The NSW Department of Education's 2022 Annual Reflection: Needs-based Funding Evaluation – English language Proficiency Equity Loading is an example of an EAL/D focused School Improvement tool. The document states:

*Schools are required to reflect each year on the expenditure and impact of their needs-based funding, which includes the English language proficiency equity loading resources, as part of the School Excellence cycle. This document provides some examples of how schools can use and evaluate this needs-based funding to meet annual reporting requirements.*

<sup>156</sup> See: Gurr, D., Acquaro, D., & Drysdale, L. (2022). The Australian Context: National, State and School-Level Efforts to Improve Schools in Australia. In *Evidence-Based School Development in Changing Demographic Contexts*. (pp. 133-157). Springer, Cham.

Elfers, A., & Stritikus, T. (2013) How school and district leaders support classroom teachers' work with English language learners, *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 20, 10, pp. 1-40.

[English as an additional language or dialect \(EAL/D\) effective school practices \(nsw.gov.au\);](https://www.nsw.gov.au/evaluation-repository-search/successful-language-learners-whole-school-esl-language-and-literacy-practices)

Successful Language Learners (SLL) project in DEC NSW (2011). *Literacy and Numeracy Pilots: Final Report*.

DEEWR: Canberra. Accessed at: <https://www.cese.nsw.gov.au/evaluation-repository-search/successful-language-learners-whole-school-esl-language-and-literacy-practices>.



## 6.2 Draft finding 6.2: Planning for a supply of school leaders

ACTA does not support importing school leaders from outside the teaching profession (Report, p. 176). The evidence from other professions and institutions, for example universities, hospitals and the public service, shows that this strategy decouples professional values from managerialist processes, with the latter predominating.<sup>157</sup> Compliance requirements in schools are certainly onerous arguably out of control. The solution to that problem is a root and branch review of these requirements, not their allocation to a new management team.

The situation we have described in regard to EAL/D provision indicates that more than ‘long lead times’ are required for teachers to move into EAL/D-informed leadership roles. The current EAL/D teaching force is predominantly casualised or on short-term contracts and increasingly lacking substantive TESOL qualifications. To embark on a promotion pathway, teachers must give up teaching EAL/D. Reversing this situation requires the permanent employment, formal recognition, professional and training support, deployment and induction of currently employed EAL/D teachers into designated EAL/D leadership roles.

Ensuring a sustainable supply of competent school leaders in multilingual schools therefore also requires formal recognition, deployment and induction of currently employed EAL/D teachers into designated EAL/D leadership roles rather than reliance on long-term planning to ensure a sustainable pipeline of future school leaders.

The knowledge and skills base that can inform school leaders – and even constitute leadership itself – has further declined since the 2016 ACTA survey.<sup>158</sup> Australia led the world in the late 1980s and during the 1990s. Over the period of the next NSRA, EAL/D expertise – from the classroom to school leadership to teacher training and qualifications to research to policy-making – is in danger of disappearing altogether.

An essential start in averting this tipping point would be for the next NSRA to designate EAL/D learners as a national priority equity cohort. The flow-on effects of that single measure, coupled with the reporting and accountability measures recommended in this Report, would be profound.

### ACTA Recommendation 31

***The new NSRA should include encouragement for jurisdictions to develop a systemwide EAL/D leadership recruitment strategy for schools by:***

- ***identifying, in consultation with principals, designated EAL/D leadership positions in schools with significant EAL/D enrolments***
- ***fostering the recruitment and induction of currently employed EAL/D teachers with suitable leadership expertise.***

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<sup>157</sup> Pollitt, C. & Bouchaert, G. (2017). Public management reform. A comparative analysis – Into the age of Austerity. 4<sup>th</sup> edit. Oxford University Press.

<sup>158</sup> While preparing this submission, we received an email that highlighted this decline:

*From my perspective, TESOL (i.e. all things EAL/D and Intensive English Classes) is not really seen as a specialist job pathway. All teaching jobs really require only a Bachelor of Education. Then once you're in a school, the principal can ask you to do anything. Unfortunately, I am currently living this frustration and unable to follow the specialist path of my choosing, even though I am qualified and experienced in TESOL. I don't know what accountability measures are in place for using EAL/D funding but my principal has said to me that she "can't afford" to use that funding for an EAL/D teacher next year (i.e. which is currently my position), and I gather she means it will be combined to use on staffing of mainstream classes.*



### 6.3 Information request 6.1: Fostering EAL/D-informed school leaders

Principals and other school leaders do not currently have the resources, systemic support or professional development opportunities required to provide the leadership required in schools with Indigenous, refugee and migrant-background EAL/D learners. There are no leadership development programs that include the necessary linguistic and intercultural knowledge and skills.

ACTA believes that a nationally coordinated approach to developing the EAL/D education knowledge of school leadership would be the single-most effective and cost-efficient way of developing EAL/D informed leadership and schools. A National EAL/D Professional Development Strategy should consist of:

- the design and implementation of an accredited, scholarship-supported national school leadership professional development program aimed at building inclusive whole school systems of EAL/D support,
- development of a national whole-school EAL/D evaluation and planning tool to inform school leader decision-making towards continuous improvement of EAL/D programs, and
- development and promulgation by AITSL, for use as a professional learning framework, of supplementary EAL/D elaborations to its *Professional Standards for Teachers*, based on available EAL/D teaching frameworks that identify the knowledge and skills required by mainstream teachers at each career stage in meeting the learning needs of EAL/D students.

Expert EAL/D teachers play a vital role in teaching classes but also often play key school and district leadership roles in:

- advising and collaborating with colleagues in developing lessons and lesson sequences that include an English language and literacy focus
- advising the school leadership team on the advantages and disadvantages of different ways of programming EAL/D tuition and support, and assisting in decision-making that meets the needs of the particular school context<sup>159</sup>
- advising the leadership team on the purchase of appropriate resources<sup>160</sup>
- assisting the leadership team to respond in an informed way to pressure from commercial marketers
- supervising and mentoring early career teachers in practicum placements and internships.
- guiding the school's response to linguistically and culturally diverse students, their carers and the wider community
- providing the core personnel and expertise to support system-and school-based EAL/D professional learning and district professional learning networks.

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<sup>159</sup> Schlaman, H. (2019). Designing structures and pathways to support language development and content learning for English learners: Dilemmas facing school leaders. *International Multilingual Research Journal*, 13(1), 32-50.

<sup>160</sup> From the ACTA 2016 survey:

*The leadership team, especially the Principal, is willing to accept the recommendations of the qualified EALD staff. We are able to buy bilingual teacher aides, resources and necessary equipment (iPads, etc) as we see fit. Qualified EAL/D teacher of new arrivals in a Qld government school.*

Recognition of the professional work and expertise of EAL/D teachers in leadership roles, especially in schools with significant enrolments of EAL/D learners, could be substantively improved by developing EAL/D Elaborations of the AITSL's *Australian Professional Standard for Principals and Leadership Profiles*. This would support an EAL/D leadership career pathway.

### **ACTA Recommendation 32**

***The Commonwealth develop a National EAL/D Professional Development Strategy to build the EAL/D education knowledge of school leaders and the EAL/D service capabilities of schools. The strategy should include:***

- ***an accredited, scholarship-supported national school leadership professional development program***
- ***development of a national whole school EAL/D evaluation and planning tool***
- ***development and promulgation by AITSL of supplementary EAL/D Elaborations to its Professional Standards for Teachers for use as a professional learning framework.***

### **ACTA Recommendation 33**

***AITSL should support development of an EAL/D leadership career pathway by developing EAL/D Elaborations for the Australian Professional Standard for Principals and Leadership Profiles.***

## **6.4 Specific issues in remote Indigenous contexts**

When a principal understands students' learning needs and can work with the school's community, attendance improves and students learn. Currently, some principals in remote Indigenous communities are heroic in their knowledge, skills and commitment but our understanding is that the lack of system support is making such school leaders increasingly rare.

In response to a draft of this section, a literacy consultant wrote to us as follows:

*Some of the challenges I have faced over the years that resulted in very little change and improvement for our Indigenous students in ... [name of State] include:*

- *regional officers (coaches and advisors) all doing the same work in silos as they are not working together as a state-wide team*
- *the Regional Director and Assistant Regional Directors not leading or supporting the work*
- *school pedagogies are fixed and not differentiating for language needs*
- *Indigenous EALD is 'everyone's' business which reduces work to tokenism, poor practice, competing practices (so many demands on schools)*
- *teachers not 'trained' in explicit language teaching and English grammar*
- *staff movement means that after schools have received support it is not continued in the following years due to this staff movement. Not getting traction.*

*We just keep meeting and working on solutions but until leadership is on board, we are not being terribly effective and it's the students who suffer.*

Improvements to this situation will only follow if:

- selection criteria for leadership positions in remote regions and schools require knowledge and proof of cultural competence to work in Indigenous contexts<sup>161</sup>
- incentives are offered to applicants and existing principals with proven experience of working with Indigenous people and communities to take up and continue in leadership positions in remote schools
- quality cultural competence training, including face-to-face training, is provided both initially and on an on-going yearly basis for principals appointed to remote Indigenous communities<sup>162</sup>
- mentoring programs are developed for Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff in leadership positions in remote Indigenous schools
- current and future Indigenous educational leaders are supported to develop their skills and abilities to take on responsibilities in schools (see section 5.6)
- Gonski loadings for remoteness, English language and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are reflected in actual budget allocations to schools (see section 3.5)
- school principals are encouraged and supported to use their Gonski loadings to appoint TESOL-qualified teachers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and Assistant Teachers
- remote schools receive knowledgeable professional advice and substantive policy support from central offices<sup>163</sup>
- KPIs and other performance assessments encourage principals to seek out and foster community-led decisions about schools and education
- short-term contracts are not used to stifle feedback from principals.

In section 3.3, we described the expensive and inappropriate literacy programs implemented in Northern Territory remote schools, two of which were abandoned within two-three years, and a third currently in place. These have been marketed to authorities by American and now English commercial publishers. Principals who lack knowledge about EAL/D learning and the cultural competence to engage with remote communities have not questioned the mandating of these literacy programs, and those wanting to make locally based decisions about curriculum lack the knowledge and confidence to resist pressures to adopt them.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> A job description (22/8/2021) for the Regional Director of the East Arnhem Region - a region which has 13 schools, 11 of which are remote Indigenous community schools – made no reference to working in Indigenous communities. In fact, the words “Indigenous”, “Aboriginal” or “community” did not appear in the job description..

<sup>162</sup> For example, one developed by Aboriginal Resource and Development Service (ARDS) in 2019: [Cultural Competency Training — ARDS](#)

<sup>163</sup> One school leader in the NT reported to ATESOL NT that, over the last eight years, permanent Aboriginal teachers and ATs had lost their positions because, instead of being asked to sign Leave Without Pay forms when taking leave for family or cultural reasons, they were given resignation forms, which they signed not realising that, on their return, they had no job.

<sup>164</sup> In at least one case about which ATESOL NT has informed us, a principal who resisted implementing one of these programs left to find work interstate.

#### **ACTA Recommendation 34**

*The next NSRA should contain provisions that ensure that Job Descriptions and on-going Key Performance Indicators for school principals and regional directors appointed to remote areas include:*

- *demonstrated ability to work successfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote communities*
- *knowledge and understanding of the foundational role of first language and culture and how to support good EAL/D pedagogy in all school learning.*

#### **ACTA Recommendation 35**

*The next NSRA should contain provisions that ensure on-going/renewed contracts to school principals and regional directors in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are conditional on demonstration of:*

- *their engagement and work with community leaders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff*
- *their success in improving school attendance, and learning outcomes which extend well beyond NAPLAN results.*

#### **ACTA Recommendation 36**

*The next NSRA should ensure that remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school councils are genuinely empowered to participate actively in the selection of their school principal.*

#### **ACTA Recommendation 37**

*The next NSRA should seek to ensure that jurisdictions:*

- *provide compulsory face-to-face, interactive, locally relevant Cultural Competency courses for all principals and leaders responsible for remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schools*
- *require these principals and leaders to refresh and upgrade skills and understandings annually.*

#### **ACTA Recommendation 38**

*The Commonwealth should trial an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership in Schools program to support Indigenous staff who seek promotion.*

## **7. National measurement framework**

### **7.1 Draft finding 7.1: Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia (MFSA)**

In tracking outcomes for learners of English as an additional language or dialect in Australian schools, the MFSA fails against the criteria listed in Figure 7.1. It is:

- **incomplete**, because it does not include description of a crucial aspect of the performance of the approximately 600,000 English language learners in Australian schools

- **partially irrelevant**, because a misleading disaggregation (Language background other than English/LBOTE) is used to identify English language learners
- **unreliable**, because the methodologies used to assess these learners are not fit-for-purpose.

English proficiency is a crucial driver of EAL/D learners' schooling outcomes. The equity strand of the MFSA relies on language background as a broad 'diversity' indicator but it does not capture the different English language proficiency levels that enable identification of EAL/D learners within this group. As we have argued throughout this submission, the effect is to make Indigenous, refugee and migrant background EAL/D learners invisible.

In ACTA's previous submission on the NSRA to the Productivity Commission, we detailed the lack of validity and reliability of the LBOTE identification used to disaggregate reporting on NAPLAN results.<sup>165</sup> NAPLAN reporting gives a distorted and misleading picture of the literacy and numeracy outcomes of Indigenous, refugee and migrant background EAL/D learners because results do not reflect their English proficiency levels or take account of EAL/D learning trajectories.<sup>166</sup>

For example, English language learner performance is completely hidden in the progress reporting against NSRA sub-outcomes of existing student cohorts in Figure 3.3 of the Report (pp. 84-85). Lowered and increased proportions of equity cohorts in the respective bottom and top two NAPLAN performance bands in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 fail to capture both the significant progress of newly-arrived English language learners entering school in these years as well as the underachievement of refugees with minimal/no previous schooling and continuing English language learners across these years. Inability to disaggregate these sub-outcome metrics for the EAL/D learner cohort ensures that the key English language drivers of educational outcomes for this equity cohort cannot be reported, and their needs, achievement and progress in relation to NSRA outcomes, targets and objectives remain hidden.

The inability to report accurately on English language proficiency has far-reaching consequences for equitable education policy and practice. It either perpetuates deficit assumptions about EAL/D learners by misidentifying them as failing literacy learners or it conceals their needs by conflating them with successful and/or monolingual English students from households where other languages are spoken.

## 7.2 The pernicious use of NAPLAN tests in assessing Indigenous EAL/D learners

Reporting against NAPLAN results is particularly detrimental for Indigenous EAL/D learners. As we have pointed out (section 3.3), NAPLAN assessments assume norms for mother-tongue/fluent English speakers and urban school contexts and experiences. They do not reflect the stepping stones in EAL/D pathways to literacy in Standard Australian English.

The false assumption that learning literacy is the same as learning English, together with the national status of NAPLAN as a measure of schooling achievement, have led to an exclusive focus on NAPLAN results in directing system initiatives, policies, programs and strategies in remote Indigenous education. Unrealistic and inappropriate targets for improving NAPLAN results are set,

<sup>165</sup> Submission 37 pp. 7-10. See also:

ACTA submission to the Productivity Commission's *Inquiry on the National Education Evidence Base* at: [http://www.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/208903/subdr120-education-evidence.pdf](http://www.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/208903/subdr120-education-evidence.pdf)

ACTA submission to the *Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools* at: [https://tesol.org.au/wpcontent/uploads/2019/01/580\\_ACTA\\_full\\_submission\\_to\\_Gonski\\_Review\\_.pdf](https://tesol.org.au/wpcontent/uploads/2019/01/580_ACTA_full_submission_to_Gonski_Review_.pdf)

<sup>166</sup> Most obviously, a student may be highly numerate but simply unable to understand a test question in English.

such as the Indigenous Education Strategy goal that all Indigenous students will achieve the same NAPLAN levels as non-Indigenous students within ten years.<sup>167</sup>

The majority of remote Indigenous students are in the early phases of learning to read and write in English.<sup>168</sup> These students cannot engage with NAPLAN tests. When NAPLAN tests are administered, these students are instructed to sit quietly in the room and colour in the bubbles on the test pages.<sup>169</sup> The tests are strange, confusing and progressively alienating for them. The requirement that all students sit NAPLAN tests effectively mandates failure for remote Indigenous English language learners. Their experience of failure is re-enforced every semester by “Es” on their reports because their schoolwork is assessed against the ACARA English and Maths curriculum. The constant documenting of their failure and resultant discouragement is a key reason for Indigenous students withdrawing from schooling.

The repeated documenting of Indigenous students’ failure against NAPLAN benchmarks has created a discourse of failure that permeates Indigenous educational provision at all levels together with a culture of evasion and window-dressing at senior administrative levels.

### **ACTA Recommendation 39**

***The mandate that all students sit NAPLAN should be revised to allow schools to exclude students who are in the early stages of learning to read and write in English, according to the EAL/D assessment systems used in that jurisdiction.***

### **7.3 Information request 7.1: NSRA standalone reporting**

The multiplicity of current reporting mechanisms and their various components makes it virtually impossible for a national advocacy body, such as ACTA, to decipher what is being done to further the achievements of the students we seek to represent. This problem is aggravated by the invisibility of these students as a designated national equity cohort from the highest level downwards.

For example, this year ACTA commissioned an intern working with us to review annual reports of State and Territory education systems to discover what and how they report on initiatives and outcomes for EAL/D learners. These reports vary from providing extensive detail on a vast array of programs that may or may not improve EAL/D learning outcomes to failing to mention EAL/D learners, learning, languages other than English or make any reference to the sub-outcomes listed in Table 7.1. The one feature they have in common is a failure to document English proficiency levels and/or any evidence of EAL/D learner outcomes in connection with the array of initiatives listed.

As another example, our member association ATESOL NT has done extensive research seeking to understand the discrepancy between funding for the NT Indigenous students in remote schools as shown on the My School website and actual school budgets (see section 3.5). This task has proved extremely complex, time-consuming and difficult.

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<sup>167</sup> For example, the 2015 NT Indigenous Education Strategy (IES) refers exclusively to NAPLAN as the means of measuring its impact on student achievement in remote schools. Indigenous Education Strategy: A Share in the Future, 2015, p.7.

<sup>168</sup> On the ACARA EAL/D Learning Progressions, they would be in the Beginning and Emerging phases.

<sup>169</sup> A scene in the movie *In My Blood It Runs* shows the teacher telling students always to colour in a box because they have a 1 in 4 chance of getting something correct.



Our response to this Information request 7.1 is, therefore, that reporting should:

1. include explicit reference to English proficiency levels and English learning gains
2. be consistent across different measurement tools and annual reports
3. take account of the audiences who seek to access these reports.<sup>170</sup>

An important corollary relates to how these reports are interpreted. Targets must be based on evidence-based norms that take account of the diversity of EAL/D learner cohorts, for example migrants with Australian age-equivalent schooling, refugees with minimal/no previous schooling, young learners entering schooling from homes where languages other than English are commonly used, and Indigenous students in remote communities where English is not used in daily life (see sections 1.2 and 4.?? on language ecologies.)

#### **ACTA Recommendation 40**

*National performance reporting for the EAL/D learner cohort should be included in the next NSRA, consisting of a specific English language proficiency sub-outcome metric and English learning gain, and be explicitly identifiable within or in addition to the National Report on Schooling in Australia and the ACARA dashboard for performance reporting. The National Report on Schooling in Australia should be aligned to the sub-outcomes reported in the standalone National School Reform Agreement report, including English language proficiency outcomes.*

#### **7.4 Draft recommendation 7.1: NSRA performance reporting framework**

ACTA endorses the recommendation to commit to public reporting on each NSRA outcome by jurisdiction and the addition of the named sub-outcome measures. Our endorsement of a wellbeing outcome is dependent on it including language-mediated wellbeing as described in section 4.

NAPLAN reporting on EAL/D learners is unsatisfactory, as we have argued above and in our previous submissions. Deficit views of EAL/D learners are promoted when the standards used to report on these learners assume a monolingual English learning context and trajectory. We note that so-called ‘strength-based reporting principles’ can act in exactly the opposite way as if strengths are defined from a monolingual English perspective: see section 3.

#### **7.5 Information request 7.2: Proposed sub-outcomes**

The sub-outcomes proposed for the next NSRA reflect the aspirations of the students whose interests ACTA seeks to represent. However, unless EAL/D learning outcomes are identifiable, there will be no way of knowing to what extent these sub-outcomes have been achieved for these students.

In ACTA’s previous submission, we detailed the failure to progress the ACARA EAL/D Learning Progression as a nationally consistent measure of English language proficiency.<sup>171</sup> ACARA’s initial

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<sup>170</sup> That is, while consistent, reports should be tailored to meet the level and kind of detail required by different audiences, ranging from policy makers and academic researchers to stakeholders (e.g. educators, parents/communities) to bodies advocating on behalf of particular groups e.g. EAL/D learners, students with disability, students in remote and regional areas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and communities.

<sup>171</sup> Submission 37 pp. 10-11. The NSW Government education system has shown that use of the EAL/D Learning Progression by teachers for assessing and reporting the EAL/D learner cohort is accurate, reliable and trustworthy. Since trialling and validating teachers’ use of the tool in 2012, it has been successfully using the EAL/D Learning Progression as a measure of English language proficiency for needs-based resource allocation to schools. In 2021, the Department also commenced annual public reporting of EAL/D students against the four phases of the EAL/D Learning

submission to the Commission Inquiry explains that, although most States/Territories use the ACARA English Language Progressions to allocate resources to EAL/D learners, ‘differences in methodology means that a nationally consistent approach is currently not feasible without prioritisation and resources for further work’ (p. 8).

ACTA supports ACARA’s resumption of the project with a focus on:

1. using the ACARA EAL/D Learning Progression to gain a national picture of EAL/D learners’ English proficiency levels and learning gains
2. creating an EAL/D student data flag enabling the EAL/D student cohort to be identified and tracked within national data sets
3. developing data capabilities of state and territory jurisdictions to enable nationally comparable EAL/D reporting with a view to incorporating this reporting in the next ACARA National Measurement Framework.

This action would deliver on NPI commitments C(iii) to ‘improve national data quality, consistency and collection to improve the national evidence base and inform policy development’, and C(iii)b) to ‘consider strategic opportunities to enhance the national evidence base, including options for measures of ... student learning gain.’<sup>172</sup>

Recommendations to include EAL/D assessments in reporting English proficiency levels and progress assume, of course, that those undertaking these assessments have the necessary expertise. As we have detailed in section 5, this expertise is being progressively undermined by system failure to require teachers with EAL/D responsibilities to hold TESOL qualifications. In consequence, the reliability of EAL/D reporting in some schools and jurisdictions is questionable. Professional development coupled with moderation sessions for teachers undertaking EAL/D assessments is needed to address this problem.

#### **ACTA Recommendation 41**

***The national collaborative project using the ACARA EAL/D Learning Progression should be brought to completion with a view to implementing it as the agreed benchmark for national reports on EAL/D learners’ English language proficiency levels.***

#### **ACTA Recommendation 42**

***Assessments of EAL/D proficiency and learning gains should be regionally or centrally moderated to promote accuracy of EAL/D data.***

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Progression. A national survey of school systems conducted in 2020 found that many Government and Catholic education systems were already using the EAL/D Learning Progression to identify or report on EAL/D learner needs. The Progression therefore has the potential to be used at school, system, jurisdiction and national levels to identify the EAL/D learner target group; identify English language learning support needs; analyse and report EAL/D learners’ NAPLAN performance, and as an additional indicator of educational disadvantage in the calculation of ICSEA (replacing the disadvantaged LBOTE measure). The further review should ensure that experts in EAL/D learning and assessment are given leading roles in this project and that consultation occurs with teachers and other educators responsible for using EAL/D assessments. See: Statistics Unit, Centre for Educational Statistics and Evaluation, NSW DEC. (2013). NSW Trial of the reliability and validity of the EAL/D Learning Progression, DEC: Sydney. at: <http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au/documents/15060385/15385042/Report26Februaryfinal.pdf>

<sup>172</sup> <https://www.dese.gov.au/quality-schools-package/resources/national-school-reform-agreement-p.24>

## 7.6 Draft recommendation 7.2: Review of the MFSA

ACTA supports draft recommendation 7.2, conditional on acceptance of our recommendation 41, i.e. that measures appropriate to EAL/D learning are used.

We support annual tabling of the MFSA in Parliament, including additional contextual information on influences on student's English language and literacy learning using jurisdictional EAL/D program data. ACARA should work towards filling reporting gaps to achieve complete and comparable national data across jurisdictions building on common, well-established and exemplary State and Territory Government EAL/D student data systems.

## 7.7 Specific issues in relation to reporting on Indigenous EAL/D learners

The Commonwealth Department of Education and Training does not have information on ATSI students attracting the low English proficiency loading, nor does it hold data on the loadings that individual students attract.<sup>173</sup> Similarly, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage loading does not take account of low English language proficiency of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their need to acquire Standard Australian English in the Australian curriculum. Nor have the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage loading and the location disadvantage loading been informed by research on language learning in Indigenous communities.<sup>174</sup>

With the lack of analysis of school and enrolment data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with low English language proficiency, the Commonwealth has poor visibility on the educational needs of these learners, which impairs the capacity to develop effective language-based strategies to improve their educational participation and outcomes.

## Conclusion

EAL/D education in Australia is currently at a critical crossroad. The nature and scale of Australia's linguistic diversity with its implications for quality teaching and teacher education cannot continue to be ignored. The teaching of English to speakers of other languages in Australian schools has had a proud history of excellence and innovation but under present policy conditions, its future is now at risk.

The new NSRA is an opportunity to recognise Australia's large and diverse EAL/D learner cohort as a national equity priority and reaffirm national commitment to EAL/D reforms that 'build back better' after the educational disruptions of COVID-19. Without these reforms, EAL/D provision in schools will continue to wither along with Australia's capacity to achieve educational equity and excellence for its EAL/D learners as they struggle to master the language and literacy of the school curriculum.

A national school reform agreement that includes a focus on EAL/D learning outcomes is required to reverse the disinvestment in EAL/D education and ensure supply of an adequately trained teacher workforce for our linguistically diverse schools. This national agreement needs to be actioned through a comprehensive work plan that addresses the issues and recommendations of ACTA's submission. In so doing, the plan would ensure the effective implementation of commitments made by Heads of Government to strengthen initial teacher education and implement a national teacher workforce strategy within the National Policy Initiatives of the 2019-2023 *National Schools Reform Agreement*.

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<sup>173</sup> Answer to Senate Estimates Question on Notice SQ19-544

<sup>174</sup> Answer to Senate Estimates Question on Notice SQ19-128

## Appendix A:

### Enrolment and Attendance Data in remote NE Arnhem Land schools (2021)

Source: 2022 Answer from the NT Minister of Education to MLA Yingiya Guyula Question No. 333. Retrieved from [https://parliament.nt.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/1126326/ Answer-to-Written-Question-333.pdf](https://parliament.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1126326/Answer-to-Written-Question-333.pdf) (nt.gov.au)

1.

	<b>2021 enrolment data (#) (a)<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>2021 attendance data (%) (b)<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>2021 effective enrolment (c)</b>	<b>2022 School Resourcing Model (final funding) (d)<sup>3</sup></b>
Areyonga	37	55.1	29	857,563
Baniyala Garrangali	32	55.0	34	575,599
Gapuwiyak	198	48.8	128	2,412,742
Lajamanu	173	26.5	66	2,168,619
Maningrida	481	39.3	281	5,077,280
Milingimbi	275	33.2	110	3,783,704
Nhulunbuy High	280	74.1	247	5,986,159
Nhulunbuy Primary	378	85.6	381	4,687,503
Numbulwar	123	36.6	74	1,569,961
Ramingining	279	40.4	143	2,511,741
Shepherdson	513	34.1	300	5,628,674
Willowra	91	32.5	38	990,137
Laynhapuy Homelands <sup>4</sup>	143	55.6	97	2,547,350
Yirrkala School	103	46.1	96	2,063,500
Yuendumu	190	37.9	118	2,701,588

<sup>1</sup> Enrolment

## **Appendix B:**

### **List of ACTA Recommendations**

#### ***1. Recognising EAL/D learners as a national priority equity cohort***

##### **ACTA Recommendation 1**

EAL/D learners from Indigenous, refugee and migrant backgrounds should be identified as a priority equity cohort warranting national collaborative action through the new NSRA.

##### **ACTA Recommendation 2**

The Productivity Commission should request access to available State/Territory education system EALD student survey data to investigate concentrations of EAL/D learners in schools and report on key decile band proportions of EAL/D learner enrolments in primary and secondary schools.

##### **ACTA Recommendation 3**

The Productivity Commissions should seek to confirm or revise ACTA's estimation of 600,000 EAL/D learners in Australian schools by analysing:

1. available Commonwealth data on students attracting the English language proficiency loading funding
2. available education system reports.

#### ***2. High-level assessment of the National Policy Initiatives***

##### **ACTA Recommendation 4**

AERO research findings should include identification of the contexts of student learning outcomes, and where possible and appropriate, disaggregate results to include EAL/D learners.

##### **ACTA Recommendation 5**

As a matter of urgency, AERO should direct its attention to the pedagogical factors that contribute to and/or hinder Indigenous EAL/D's learners' academic achievement.

##### **ACTA Recommendation 6**

AERO's links with organisations responsible for delivering professional development for teachers should be strengthened.

##### **ACTA Recommendation 7**

The new NSRA should include the development, publication and implementation of jurisdiction implementation plans and comparable annual progress reporting in relation to priority equity cohorts, including EAL/D learners, and these plans should be informed by the Actions listed in the ACTA *National Roadmap for EAL/D Education in Schools*.

### *3. Lifting outcomes for all students including EAL/D learners*

#### **ACTA Recommendation 8**

Before any national implementation of intensive, targeted one-on-one or small group support for students who have fallen behind is considered, an independent evaluation should be conducted of the Victorian and NSW intensive learning support programs to determine the short and long-term benefits for equity groups, opportunity costs for education systems and the overall costs and benefits.

#### **ACTA Recommendation 9**

The next NSRA should include initiatives that directly address the specific pedagogic needs of the EAL/D learner cohort. ‘Intensive, targeted support’ for EAL/D learners should be taken to refer to system and whole school provision that caters for EAL/D learning needs through a variety of approaches that include intensive English classes, bilingual/biliteracy classes in remote Indigenous schools, parallel English classes, and collaborative teaching by EAL/D specialists with other teachers. This targeted support will require a significant upgrade in pre-service and postgraduate teacher education, and on-going professional development, for both mainstream and specialist EAL/D teachers and for school leadership.

#### **ACTA Recommendation 10**

In promoting a tailored approach for students from priority equity cohorts, the next NSRA should be explicit about the crucial role of language learning and language-based pedagogy in schools, in particular for EAL/D learners from Indigenous, migrant and refugee backgrounds.

#### **ACTA Recommendation 11**

In pursuing a language tailored approach to address systemic linguistic and educational barriers experienced by Indigenous learners in rural and remote schools, the next NSRA should initiate a National Indigenous Languages and Literacy Education Strategy aimed at leveraging students’ home languages resources and English language learning to lift their cultural agency, school engagement and academic achievement.

#### **ACTA Recommendation 12**

The next NSRA should specify enhanced funding transparency and accountability mechanisms for bilateral agreements, implementation plans and associated reporting arrangements in relation to the EAL/D learner cohort.

#### **ACTA Recommendation 13**

To ensure embedding of EAL/D learner perspectives in the new NSRA:

1. a national consultative body on EAL/D education should be established, comprising educators and researchers with recognised expertise in second/additional learning and teaching to support the design, implementation and monitoring of the initiatives of the next NSRA
2. a national research agenda should be developed in consultation with EAL/D educators to address the current pedagogical needs of EAL/D learners and teachers and underpin the implementation of the next NSRA.



#### ***4. Student wellbeing***

##### **ACTA Recommendation 14**

The concept of academic wellbeing should be further investigated with a view to its being applied as a key student wellbeing indicator in the NSRA.

##### **ACTA Recommendation 15**

The role of community organisations in assisting schools to respond to the particular needs of refugees should be recognised in the new NSRA and their services should be promoted nationally through a central online hub.

##### **ACTA Recommendation 16**

Student wellbeing initiatives should be included in the NSRA and supported by State and Territory system plans aimed at assisting schools to implement effective student wellbeing strategies and programs, particularly for equity cohorts and vulnerable student groups, including refugees, through:

1. additional allocation of wellbeing coordinators
2. development of relevant school-community organisation partnerships
3. public annual progress reporting
4. identification of best practice through annual national wellbeing conferences and AERO research support.

##### **ACTA Recommendation 17**

The school-centred domains of Australian Student Wellbeing Framework should be reviewed in light of the child-centred domains of the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth's (ARACY) student wellbeing framework to provide a universal, well-aligned, evidence-based student wellbeing framework for use in schools under the NSRA.

##### **ACTA Recommendation 18**

To ensure effective national reporting on student wellbeing outcomes under the NSRA, the Commonwealth Government should establish a national partnership with ARACY to provide annual Taking the Pulse reports and biennial Report Cards by State and Territory systems and sectors that include reports on national equity cohorts that are based on an improved alignment between its Nest student wellbeing framework and the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework.

#### ***5. Supporting teachers of EAL/D learners***

##### **ACTA Recommendation 19**

AITSL's accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia should be revised to include specific advice on course content requirements for both specialist and non-specialist preservice EAL/D courses and specialist post graduate TESOL courses.

### **ACTA Recommendation 20**

Reporting and other accountability requirements for use of the Gonski-English language proficiency loading should include reporting on the use of TESOL-qualified teachers to deliver EAL/D programs, including the ASQA level of the TESOL qualification.

### **ACTA Recommendation 21**

To ensure all teachers have the necessary knowledge and skills for effectively teaching EAL/D learners, all teacher candidates should be required to complete at least one mandatory unit on EAL/D teaching and learning in their initial teacher education program.

### **ACTA Recommendation 22**

AITSL's Australian Professional Teaching Standards should encompass supplementary standards frameworks for teaching EAL/D learners, drawing on ACTA's EAL/D Standards Elaborations and the *Capability Framework for Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D Learners*.

### **ACTA Recommendation 23**

A system of school-higher education provider partnerships, supported by a national Centre for Excellence in ITE that includes a brief for EAL/D teaching research and evaluation, should be established through the next NSRA to promote best practice in teaching, supervision, mentoring and professional learning that includes EAL/D learning and teaching.

### **ACTA Recommendation 24**

The next NSRA should develop a national model of teacher supply and demand that includes EAL/D teachers, specifically with reference to:

1. data gaps in the supply, demand, retention, and attrition of TESOL-qualified teachers
2. regular public reporting and projections based on:
  - a. EAL/D learner population data arising from Australia's migration program and its increasing linguistic diversity
  - b. system staffing data and resourcing plans
  - c. provision for specialist EAL/D teaching
  - d. TESOL-qualified graduates (ITE and postgraduate)
3. EAL/D teacher recruitment and retention strategies.

### ***6. The lack of teachers from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds***

### **ACTA Recommendation 25**

The next NSRA should include targets for training and appointing appropriately trained and qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Assistant Teachers and Teachers, including in remote schools.

### **ACTA Recommendation 26**

The next NSRA should require jurisdictions to maintain an annual public record of the total number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers and Assistant Teachers employed in their schools, which is updated annually.

### **ACTA Recommendation 27**

As part of the next NSRA, the Commonwealth should offer to support jurisdictions in planning, resourcing, improving, upgrading and evaluating one or more purpose-designed Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education programs that build on the experience of the Northern Territory RATE trial (which ran from Feb-June 2021 in 4 communities). The Program(s) should:

1. contain appropriate content for experienced Assistant Teachers in remote schools, which respects and builds on their knowledge as speakers of Aboriginal languages and their status as cultural custodians in their communities
2. offer qualifications at levels that are directly tied to jurisdictions' salary scales
3. ensure adequate support for enrolled Assistant Teachers to develop their academic English skills
4. be delivered by teacher educators who:
  - a. are employed onsite in the remote schools participating in the program
  - b. qualified, experienced and competent in EAL/D and bilingual pedagogy in remote contexts
5. be progressively extended to other communities with relatively large populations; these communities could be designated as "hubs" for more comprehensive coverage
6. include the following stakeholders in developing and accrediting the Program(s):
  - a. employing authorities
  - b. training providers (e.g. Charles Darwin University and Batchelor Institute)
  - c. accreditation authorities (the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership/AITSL, the Australian Qualifications Authority/ASQA, and State/Territory Teachers Registration Boards).

### **ACTA Recommendation 28**

To assist in reducing teacher workload, the next NRSA should develop a new National Policy Initiative that encourages a whole-school approach to curriculum planning and development, supported by a suite of comprehensive, high-quality support materials and development of school curriculum expertise, including EAL/D expertise, tied to Highly Accomplished and Lead teacher roles.

### **ACTA Recommendation 29**

The next NSRA should address employment and career pathways for EAL/D teachers by explicitly specifying EAL/D as a target area for improving teacher effectiveness in the processes by which teachers:

1. are appointed to permanent positions with responsibilities for teaching EAL/D
2. become Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers, including teaching EAL/D
3. contribute to localised communities of practice.

### **ACTA Recommendation 30**

Classroom-based research, including research into EAL/D teaching and learning, should be encouraged and supported as an initiative in the next NSRA through:

1. targeted research scholarships
2. national priority equity group focused funding from the Australian Research Council
3. research grants to professional associations.

## ***7. Fostering EAL/D informed leadership***

### **ACTA Recommendation 31**

The new NSRA should include encouragement for jurisdictions to develop a systemwide EAL/D leadership recruitment strategy for schools by:

1. identifying, in consultation with principals, designated EAL/D leadership positions in schools with significant EAL/D enrolments
2. fostering the recruitment and induction of currently employed EAL/D teachers with suitable leadership expertise.

### **ACTA Recommendation 32**

The Commonwealth develop a National EAL/D Professional Development Strategy to build the EAL/D education knowledge of school leaders and the EAL/D service capabilities of schools. The strategy should include:

1. an accredited, scholarship-supported national school leadership professional development program
2. development of a national whole school EAL/D evaluation and planning tool
3. development and promulgation by AITSL of supplementary EAL/D Elaborations to its Professional Standards for Teachers for use as a professional learning framework.

### **ACTA Recommendation 33**

AITSL should support development of an EAL/D leadership career pathway by developing EAL/D Elaborations for the Australian Professional Standard for Principals and Leadership Profiles.

#### **ACTA Recommendation 34**

The next NSRA should contain provisions that ensure that Job Descriptions and on-going Key Performance Indicators for school principals and regional directors appointed to remote areas include:

1. demonstrated ability to work successfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote communities
2. knowledge and understanding of the foundational role of first language and culture and how to support good EAL/D pedagogy in all school learning.

#### **ACTA Recommendation 35**

The next NSRA should contain provisions that ensure on-going/renewed contracts to school principals and regional directors in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are conditional on demonstration of:

1. their engagement and work with community leaders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff
2. their success in improving school attendance and learning outcomes which extend well beyond NAPLAN results.

#### **ACTA Recommendation 36**

The next NSRA should ensure that remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school councils are genuinely empowered to participate actively in the selection of their school principal.

#### **ACTA Recommendation 37**

The next NSRA should seek to ensure that jurisdictions:

1. provide compulsory face-to-face, interactive, locally relevant Cultural Competency courses for all principals and leaders responsible for remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schools
2. require these principals and leaders to refresh and upgrade skills and understandings annually.

#### **ACTA Recommendation 38**

The Commonwealth should trial an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership in Schools program to support Indigenous staff who seek promotion.

### ***8. National Measurement Framework***

#### **ACTA Recommendation 39**

The mandate that all students sit NAPLAN should be revised to allow schools to exclude students who are in the early stages of learning to read and write in English, according to the EAL/D assessment systems used in that jurisdiction.

#### **ACTA Recommendation 40**

National performance reporting for the EAL/D learner cohort should be included in the next NSRA, consisting of a specific English language proficiency sub-outcome metric and English learning gain, and be explicitly identifiable within or in addition to the National Report on Schooling in Australia and the ACARA dashboard for performance reporting. The National Report on Schooling in Australia

should be aligned to the sub-outcomes reported in the standalone National School Reform Agreement report, including English language proficiency outcomes.

**ACTA Recommendation 41**

The national collaborative project using the ACARA EAL/D Learning Progression should be brought to completion with a view to implementing it as the agreed benchmark for national reports on EAL/D learners' English language proficiency levels.

**ACTA Recommendation 42**

Assessments of EAL/D proficiency and learning gains should be regionally or centrally moderated to promote accuracy of EAL/D data.

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## Appendix C:

### Abbreviations

ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
ACTA	Australian Council of TESOL Associations
AERO	Australian Education Research Organisation
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
ALAA	Applied Linguistics Association of Australia
ALTANZ	Association for Language Testing and Assessment of Australia and New Zealand
AMEP	Adult Migrant English Program
ANAO	Australian National Audit Office
ARACY	Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth
ARDS	Aboriginal Resource and Development Service
ASQA	Australian Skills Aquality Authority
ATs	Assistant Teachers
ATWD	Australian Teacher Workforce Data Collection
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (cf. CALP)
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (cf. BICS)
CDU	Charles Darwin University
CIS	Centre for Independent Studies
DI	Direct Instruction
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EAL/D (EALD)	English as an Additional Language or Dialect
ELL	English language learner
IECM	Indigenous Education Consultative Meeting
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
LANE	Literacy and Numeracy Essentials
LBOTE	Language background other than English
MFSA	Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
MYAN	Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program
NIAA	National Indigenous Australians Agency
NPI	National Policy Initiative
NSRA	National School Reform Agreement
PD	Professional development
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
QITE	Quality Initial Teacher Education (report)
RATE	Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education
RWI	Read Write Inc
SNAICC	Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care
STARTTS	Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors
TELL	Teaching English Language Learners
TESMC	Teaching ESL Students in Mainstream classrooms
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WILE	Wellbeing and Indigenous Language Ecologies